

No 31

47.F.6

Sold by *Thomas Butter*, Bookseller, near *St. Martins-lane* in *Exon*, where (besides Books and Stationary-Wares of all sorts) is sold the best of *Mathematical* and *Sea Instruments*; several sorts of *Physical Medicines*, as *Dr. Daffy's Elixir Salutis*, *Stoughton's Elixir Stomachicum*, *Spirit of Scurvy-Grass Golden and Plain*, &c. Also the famous *Cephalick* or *Liquid-Snuff*, prepar'd for the *Queen*. With *Japan-Ink*, *Indian-Ink*, *Cake-Ink*, *Ink-Powder*, *Common Ink*; *Ink-Glasses*, *Pounce*, *shining Sand*; great Variety of *Paper-Hangings* for *Rooms*, the best of *Stampt-Parchment* and *Paper*, *Bonds*, &c. At Reasonable Rates, by Wholesale or Retail.

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Theophilus Dorrington
Londonensis, Eccle^{sia} Anglicanae Presb^r.

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FAMILY DEVOTIONS³
FOR
Sunday Evenings :
In Four VOLUMES,
Each containing
Thirteen Practical Discourses ;
WITH
Suitable Prayers,
FOR THE
Four Quarters of the YEAR.

By THEOPHILUS DORRINGTON, Rector
of *Wittresham*, in *Kent*.

The Third Edition Revised.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *John Wyat*, at the *Rose* in
St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1703.

FAMILY DEVOTIONS

FOR

Sundays & Evenings :

in 10 VOLUMES

each containing



Suitable Prayers

FOR THE

Four Quarters of the YEAR.

By THOMAS BARNARD, Rector
of St. Paul's Church, London.

Of the Church of St. Paul, London.

LONDON.

Printed for John Widdowes, at the Bible in
St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1793.

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THE PREFACE.

I*T is an unquestionable Eternal Truth, that which the Spirit of God hath said by Solomon, that Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any People. And the sad Experience of our own Nation does at present but too well prove the latter Part of the Maxim. It were very easie to shew, that the Fundamental Cause of all our Disadvantages, is the Great Decay of Religion among us; and the want of that Frugality and Temperance; that Honesty and Faithfulness; that diligent and industrious Application to the Duties of our several Offices and Stations; that Reverence and Fear of Almighty God, and of Magistrates which represent Him; that Denial of our Selves, and Love to our Neighbour, and our Country, and Concern for the Publick Interest, which Religion would teach and possess Men with. This is that which confounds or clogs our Affairs; this exposes us to the Losses which we sustain from our Enemies; this diminishes our Strength and Valour, our Wisdom and Skill, our Trade and Wealth, our Honour, and Reputation in the World. It is the abundance of Wickedness among all Ranks, and in all Companies of Men, which breaks our Union, and*

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disturbs our Peace at Home, which weakens, retards and delays our Efforts abroad, which supports our Enemies, and is likely to help them at last to triumph over us, and which hurries us apace towards our Ruine.

These Things are a most sensible Grief and Trouble to all those that have any Love to Piety and Vertue, or themselves, and that have any Love to or Concern for the Prosperity and Welfare of their Country. And where there are any such Principles dwelling, it cannot be, but they will put a Man upon all the Endeavours he is capable of, at least in his own Station and Office, to remedy and cure the common, deplorable, and mischievous Wickedness. This is that which has occasioned the publishing of the following Books; while I thought my self obliged, from my Function, to serve this Design as well as I could; and my unhappy Circumstances would not allow me to do much in it any other Way; since I have been drove from a small Charge by the Inconveniencies of a Place, which I found my Constitution too tender to bear.

I doubt not but it will appear to every one, who well considers the Matter; that a Religious Observation of Sabbaths, and the Pious Education, and good Instruction of young People in Families, and all Places concern'd in the Education of Youth, are Things absolutely necessary, and very useful towards the Recovery of Religion among us. And I hope that the Necessity of endeavouring this, and the Usefulness of this Means to effect it, will recommend the Design of these Books, and justify the proposing, and urging such an Exercise as they are

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are intended to assist and promote : I shall therefore only say, what I think farther necessary to direct the Right and Profitable Use of these Books, and promote it, and that but briefly.

I desire, then, That it may be particularly observed, That it is not the Design of these Books to draw People from the Publick to Private Exercises of Religion on the Lord's Day : Or, To make them satisfie themselves with the latter, in the neglect of the former. God forbid they should be but Accessary to this, or but accidentally occasion it : And this I hope will not be if some of the following Discourses be well observed : Wherein I have represented, as I ought to do, the Publick Worship of God, as that which does most honour Him ; is most acceptable and pleasing to Him ; and will in likelihood be most profitable to our selves : Which Things may be seen in the Discourse concerning the Religious Observation of Sabbaths, and in that on Publick Prayer. These Books therefore (let it be known) are intended for the Use of those who cannot enjoy the Publick Worship, or who have much Time to spare on the Lord's Day, besides what that takes up, and they commonly spend it so ill, as to lose all the Benefit of what they enjoy'd in Publick. It is because I believe the joyning of several Persons together in Religious Exercises, and the Worship of God, to be very useful, and most advantageous, to promote our Devotion and Seriousness in them, and our Benefit by them, that I have propos'd this Method, and Assistance, of engaging and uniting whole Families in such Exercises.

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And now I recommend the Use of these Books to Private Families. I cannot chuse but think, that those of the Nobility and Gentry are not above it: I am sure, when we see them in any Publick Offices or Stations, we have often very sore and sensible Reason to wish, that there were more True and Undissembled Religion among them. Nor is it above those of the meanest Rank, if they have a Person among 'em that can read; which certainly no Family in England can want without great Neglect. And as the Labouring People and the Busiest Traders may, if they will, have leisure enough for the Exercise herein recommended on the Lord's Day; so certainly the Gentry might spare so much time as this would take up, from their idle Visits, and Pleasures on that Day, and would thus spend it much more to their Honour and Advantage. I think I have so contrived the following Discourses and Prayers, as that the whole Exercise may be performed in an Hour's space: And I am sure no Person that has already any sense or relish of Devotion can think that too much to be spent on such a Day in Religious Worship, besides the Publick Worship, altho' they have had opportunity of attending twice upon that. And for those who have not that Blessed and Happy State of Mind, this is necessary to bring them to it: Which they are never likely to be possess'd with, while they accustom themselves to return immediately to their worldly Cares and Pleasures from the Publick Worship, and so spend the rest of the Holy Day upon them: And so short a Performance as this may bring them to it by degrees without the danger of tiring them.

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I recommend these Books, and such an Exercise particularly, to all Schools and Seminaries of Youth. In which there ought certainly to be as much Care taken to form the Manners of young People, to season and possess their Minds with Piety, Wisdom and Vertue, as to teach them any thing else. To be sure this will conduce and avail much more to the Honour and Decency, and Happiness of their Life in this World, than any thing else that can be taught them; and is besides requisite to the Salvation of their Souls in that eternal, and much more important Life which we are all made for.

*I think fit to recommend the Use of these Books to Masters of Vessels; who have their Company under them as their Family. These being perhaps for the greatest part of their time at Sea, are all that while detained from the Publick Worship, and those Ordinances of God which are his appointed Means of Grace and Salvation: And how sad and deplorable Effects of this, do commonly appear in the profane and irregular Lives of our Seamen? To make them the better then; that they may be the better Company to one another, while they are separated from all the World besides; that they may be the better Servants to those who trust and employ them; the better Subjects to their King, and the happier in the Good Government of themselves; I advise, I do most earnestly entreat, That the Masters would take some time on every Sunday to gather as many about them, as Sailing and Weather will permit, to worship God together, by hearing
His*

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His Word read, and by joining to offer up a Common Prayer to God. If we may give any Credit to the Principles of our Religion, we may also conclude, That the many Misfortunes of our Navigation, and the sinking, and declining of our Glory at Sea, both in Trade and War is the Punishment of that great Wickedness, which is amongst this sort of Persons: And I may add too, That as the Blessing of God is absolutely necessary to the good Success of every Undertaking, and the best Acknowledgment of Him in all our Ways, is the most likely to obtain that His Blessing; so this Course, especially with a Reformation attending it, would be most likely to procure them safe and prosperous Voyages.

I cannot forbear to wish too, That our Merchants, who send their Servants or Relations abroad to learn Trades, would furnish the Colonies and Factories of our Country-Men, with such Helps of Religion as These; especially where they are not served with Ministers. And certainly the common extream Wickedness of such Places, which proves often very unhappy to those that are there, which is highly scandalous to our most Holy Religion in the sight of Infidels, and which is often very Vexations and Troublesome to those at Home that are concern'd with them, does loudly call upon them for all the Care that can be taken in promoting Religion in those Places: And to give them all the Assistance for this purpose which they are capable to afford.

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I recommend the Use of these Books to the Religious Societies of Young Men in the City of London, in their Meetings together: Whom I am much concerned for, That the subtle Adversary may have no Advantage against them, by putting them upon such Exercises as may be of ill Consequence and Hurtful; and that all Things may be done to Edification among them.

*I have added to each Discourse here, a suitable Composed Prayer; because I believe this Way of Praying, in the ordinary Performance of the Duty at least, and in company with others, to be most agreeable to the Word of God, most suitable to the Majesty and Greatness of Him whom we pray to, and to the Weakness of us that pray: And to be most for our Edification in Faith and Holiness. It certainly deserves more Regard than some mistaken Persons are willing to give to it, that our Blessed Saviour, when His Disciples desired Him to teach them to pray, should answer their Request in this very Way; even by composing a Prayer for them to use: Which that he did, His very Words in St. Luke, (Chap. 11. Ver. 2.) do most manifestly express; for He recommends that Prayer to them which He had composed, with these Words, When ye pray, say. Herein He intimates, That 'tis part of the Duty of His Ministers in the Church, to teach People to pray, and to do it by composing fit Prayers for them, according as their Occasions and Necessities shall require. He intimates, that this Way of Praying is the best and fittest for ordinary Practice, and that which will be most acceptable with God. If any
Master*

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Master of a Family uses These Prayers in his Family, it is but as if he should desire a Minister to pray with them, as People are wont to do when such a Person comes to stay a Night at their House. If any one dislikes These Prayers, and thinks he can compose better, or such as are more suitable to his Family; or thinks himself bound not to satisfie himself with using the Gifts of God's Ministers, but that he ought to exercise his own, for the Instruction and Edification of his Family: I wish and advise such a Person to compose a Set of Prayers for his Use. Certainly, whatever Gift or Spirit of Prayer can now be reasonably pretended to be afforded to the Church, since Inspiration is ceased, that Gift and Spirit may be exercised in the composing and writing down our Prayers before we offer them: And there is no Man but needs exercise that Gift better, and to a much better Performance of his Duty in this Way, than in the lazy, careless dependance upon sudden Thoughts, and unpremeditated Expressions. Without taking this Course, I doubt not that the most are in the sight of God accounted to offer Him the Halt and the Maimed, and a Corrupt Thing, instead of the more compleat Male of the Flock. And of the usual sudden, unpremeditated Prayers, it may be said, as the same Prophet farther speaks of the undue Sacrifices of the Jews, Offer it now to thy Governor, will he be pleased with you, or accept your Persons, saith the Lord of Hosts, (Mal. i.) What good Account can be given of composing carefully a Petition or Address, which is to be made to a Prince, when a Man will not take such Care

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Care with his Prayer to Almighty God, but utters before Him what comes suddenly into his Mind. Besides, the State of Mind with which we pray, is much more easily kept in a right and due Posture in this Way of Praying, than in the other. This both Sense and Experience shew to those that have tried both Ways, and therefore it cannot be denied. If any Extraordinary Accidents happen to a Man's Family, which require a Prayer out of his usual Course, he should either do as David did, who composed particular Devotions for particular Occasions, as we see by the Titles of several Psalms. Or else he should find out in some Book of Devotion, or desire of some Minister, a Prayer for such a particular Occasion. I have said so much to this Matter, because I have observed, That the erroneous and unjust disparaging of Prayer by a composed Form, which has been too common among us, has had a great influence towards the bringing in the frequent Omission of Family Prayers and Worship, which is now so justly lamented by all pious Persons, and is to be lamented, both for its self, and for the fatal Fruits and Consequences of it.

I have review'd these Two Volumes upon their requiring another Impression, and have made some few Alterations, but such I confess as are of no great Importance.

Now I commit the Whole, as at first, to the good Providence of God: I humbly dedicate and devote it to His Service, for the promoting True Religion, and the Salvation of Men, which are Things most pleasing to Him: And of all those
to

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to whom These Books are serviceable, I heartily
 beg their Prayers to God for me, that it may please
 Him to give me a great Encrease of the Gifts and
 Graces of His Good Spirit, and Opportunity to
 use Them, all my Days to His Glory: And I still
 most willingly join with the Psalmist in saying,
 Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy
 Name give the Glory, for thy loving Mercy
 and thy Truth's sake.

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AND

THE
SUBJECTS
OF THE
Following DISCOURSES.

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Jer. 10. 25. Pour out thy Fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and upon the Families that call not on thy Name : —

Josh. 24. 15. — As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.

Deut. 6. 6, 7. And these Words which I command thee this Day, shall be in thine Heart : And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy Children, and shalt talk of them, when thou sittest in thine House.

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THE

THE
EXCELLENCY
OF THE
SOUL.

VOL. I.

Let us Pray:

Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious
favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all
our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorifie
thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlasting
Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Zach. 12. Last Part of the First Verse.

And formeth the Spirit of Man within him.

THE Words that I have now read from the
Holy Scripture, are part of a very Ma-
jestic Preface or Introduction to a favou-
rable Prophecy concerning Judah and Je-
rusalem, which is understood to foretel the Times of
the Maccabees; the distresses of those times, and the
mighty Deliverances which God would give the Jews
by the Conduct, and Courage, and Resolution of those
Men.

Men. In so great lofty Expressions, the Prophet was directed to introduce it, that he might encourage the Faith, and raise the Expectations of that People, who were now in a very weak and low Condition: For they were but newly returned from their Captivity, and were envied, and hated, and opposed in their present Interests by wicked and powerful Neighbours. He reminds them herein of the great Works of that God in whom he would have them now put their trust. The whole *Verse* and *Preface* contains thus much; *The Burthen of the Word of the Lord for Israel saith the Lord, who stretcheth forth the Heavens, and layeth the Foundations of the Earth, and formeth the Spirit of Man within him.*

That which we may observe in this Text is; That the Prophet places this work of God, *His forming the Spirit of Man within him*, together with his stretching out the wide and spacious Heaven, and his laying the Foundations of the ponderous Earth; and that, when he design'd to represent the Greatness of God, his ability and fitness to do what he had promised, by shewing them the Works he had already done. This therefore we may reckon is here intimated to be a Work parallel with those that are mentioned with it, and fit to be mentioned with them to the same purpose: This is a great and mighty Work as well as the other two. All God's Works of Creation do declare their Author's Greatness, and (as the Psalmist speaks) *Praise him*. But some do this more than others, as they are more excellent, and greater than others. Elsewhere also the Scripture mentions the making of Man as one of the more excellent and wonderful Works of God, and sets it together with his making the Earth, and stretching out the Heavens: As, in *Isa. 45. 12.* where God, to magnify himself in the esteem of that People, and to assure them that he could raise up one that should deliver them from Captivity, says by his Prophet, *I have made the Earth; and created Man upon it: I, even*

Hand

Hands have stretched forth the Heavens. Now when the making of Man is here spoken of as one of the greatest Works of God; this must needs be understood with relation to the Soul of Man. For certainly a thing so small and weak, so gross and heavy, and so dark and so decaying, as is the Humane Body, cannot justly be reckoned worthy of this great comparison: Were there nothing in the Constitution of Man but that he could not be worthy to be compared with the vast bigness of the Earth and Heavens, with the constant Motion, the brightness and durableness of the Heavenly Bodies. But the Soul of Man is in a Sense vaster and larger than these, as it is capable to comprehend them: It has a more unwearied motion than they, it moves its self, it is brighter far, and far more durable than any of them. It is then upon the account of the Spirit in Man that the making of him is thus set together with those great operations of the Creating Power.

Upon these grounds we may conclude that the Prophet *Zachary* does in our Text intimate the great excellency and dignity of the Soul of Man. It shall be the business of this Discourse to insist upon some Proof and Application of this Truth. And let us now persuade our selves for a little while to turn our Thoughts inward, to view and consider our selves, to know what a sort of Being God has given us: Of all knowledge this may be reckon'd some of the most useful and important: Hereby we shall come to understand what it becomes us to do, what our true Interest is, what great things we are capable of, and should therefore pursue.

To demonstrate the Excellency of the Soul of Man, I shall insist only upon these two Heads of Discourse, as containing what is sufficient for the present purpose; They are, the *Nature* of the Soul, and the *Capacities* of it, which do arise from, and are the Consequents of such a Nature.

In the first place, Let us consider the *Nature* of the Soul of Man: And this I shall represent to you briefly under two Particulars. 1. It is a Spirit. 2. It is Immortal.

1. The Soul of Man is a Spirit; and therein it is an Excellent Being. It is invisible; a thing that cannot be seen by the Eyes of the Body through the Excellency of it. It is said of God in praise of him, that he cannot be seen. The Apostle Paul calls him by way of Eminency, the *Invisible God*, 1 Tim. i. 17. This then is an Excellency, and does greatly recommend the Soul: It is too pure and sublime a thing to fall under the gross apprehension of Bodily Senses: It is a Pure, Uncompounded and Unmix'd thing: It is all the same, is not made up of worse and better Parts: It is in a sort all Light, and has no Darkness; is a bright celestial Ray, sprung from the great Father of Lights and Spirits; or at least it was very full of light and brightness in its Original State, and before it was sullied with sinful Pollution in the Fall of our first Parents. It has not diversity of Parts designed for divers Actions, so as that what one Part can do, another cannot, which is the usual disparagement of Bodies; But all the Soul can do, whatsoever the Soul can do: It can, all of it, understand and will, apprehend or remember; it can all chuse or refuse. It has not some parts heavy and some Active, some to move and others to be moved; but is all full of Action, and is always working and busie: It knows no weariness, it needs no rest or refreshment: It knows its own Actions, and chuses what it does, and acts freely and from its own Motion. These are the Properties and Advantages that belong to it as it is a Spirit.

That the Soul of Man is a Spirit, the Holy Scripture does abundantly declare. When a Man dies, it says of his Body, *The Dust shall return to the Earth as it was*; and of his Soul, *The Spirit shall return to God that gave it*, Eccles. 12. 7. This is a thing distinct

distinct from the Body; it was not raised from the Dust as that was, but came from God immediately; nor does it return to the Dust, but returns to God at our Death. The Apostle says, *What Man knoweth the things of a Man, that is, the purposes, wishes, designs, save the Spirit of Man which is in him?* speaking of the Soul of Man, 1 Cor. 2. 11. And in the Fifth Chapter of that Epistle, at the 5th Verse, he directs the *Corinthians* to excommunicate an Eminent Person among them who had been Incestuous, for the destruction of the Flesh, that the Spirit might be saved in the Day of the Lord, meaning his Soul. I shall add no more to this particular, but proceed,

2. To what was next mentioned, as declaring the Excellent Nature of our Souls; which was, that they are Immortal. These Beings have a beginning indeed as every thing else has, but One, who is the first Cause and Author of all others: But the Souls of Men shall never come to an End. When a Man dies there is only a separation made for a while of his Soul from his Body, with a dissolution indeed of the Body, but the Soul remains the same that it was. That lives still, though not here, and continues to be, though it has changed its Habitation. *Do not imagine* (said the dying *Cyrus* to his Children) *that when I depart from you I shall be no where, nor any longer; For whilst I was with you, ye could not see my Soul; only ye knew, by the Actions ye observed, that it was in my Body. Be assured then that it is still the same, tho' ye do never see it.* Thus the learned Heathen could speak of the Soul: And it is in the nature of this to be Immortal as it is a Spirit. It has nothing in its self to put an end to its being as it is an uncompoundd thing: It cannot be destroyed by any thing else but only by God that made it. The Soul of Man knows no decay, it admits of no encrease of its Substance; it remains always the same, and is herein a Noble Image of the Unchangeable God. It shall out-last the strongest works of Humane

Art: It shall endure longer than the Heavens and the Earth: It shall weary time, and then run on with Eternity. This is a very great and important Excellency of it, That it shall never cease to be: and certainly if we are in any respect Immortal, this deserves our very serious consideration.

And this also the Holy Scripture (that source of all saving-Knowledge and Wisdom) does sufficiently teach us, when it speaks of our Being after this Life, and even before the Resurrection of our Bodies; As when our Saviour said to the penitent Thief when he was dying, *This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*: He was to Be, therefore his Soul was not to be dissolved with his Body; and he was to be in *Paradise*, in a happy State. When the Scripture calls Death a Departure out of this World, it seems to intimate this. The Apostle *Paul* who was to leave his Body in this World, as all other dying Persons do, yet speaks of his Death as a Departure, *1 Tim. 1. 6*. And in *Phil. 1. 23*. he speaks of his Death as what he desired, in these words, *I desire to depart and to be with Christ*: Which does most plainly shew, he expected to Be still, and to be more happy after Death than he was here. Again, this is also plainly suggested by our Saviour in the Parable of the Rich Man and *Lazarus*, *Luke 16*. from Verse 19 to the end, which you may read at leisure. The Soul of Man, then, is at his Death disposed to such abodes as it deserves, and is suited to, till the time of the General Resurrection of the Bodies of Men, and then it shall be united to its own Body again, and live with it for ever in a State of endless Happiness, or endless Misery. Thus much may suffice to shew the Excellency of the Soul of Man from its Nature.

The Second Head of the Proof of this which I shall now speak to is, the Capacities of the Soul arising from its Nature. It will give us a farther apprehension of its Excellency to consider what great and honourable things it is capable of. And these I shall speak of under

der three Heads. It is capable of Knowledge; of Moral Qualifications; and of a most sublime and elevated kind of Happiness.

1. It is capable of Knowledge. It can know the Creatures about us which are the Objects of our Senses, can understand their Nature and Use; by virtue of which it has, and exercises a Dominion over these things: It knows how to apply them to the serving our Necessity and Delight. By virtue of this it can make those things which have no use of reason themselves, to serve for rational and wise Purposes: It can tame the wild, and correct the hurtful Creatures: It can govern the Strong, and by artful application give strength to the weak Ones: It often fetches wholesome Food or very effectual Physick out of mortal Poysons.

The Soul of Man is capable of knowing himself: To understand his own Nature in the principles and end of it: To know his Ornaments and Disparagements, the causes and means of his Happiness or Misery, and wherein these do truly consist and lie.

Man is capable to understand and know very much of the Ever-blessed God, the Highest Being; to apprehend and meditate upon the most glorious and delightful Perfections of his Infinite Nature. He can see the Marks and Characters of these perfections upon the sensible things (which is the most excellent Knowledge, and the best use of them) as the Apostle suggests; *Rom. 1. 20. The Invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.*

The Soul of Man renders him capable of knowing the Rules of true Wisdom; of that Wisdom which is from above. Those Rules which direct us to render our selves acceptable and amiable to God and one another, to Become and Honour our selves: Those Rules by which the Wise and Holy Angels govern their behaviour; and those by which the most Holy God,

tho' in an Infinite Eminency above all his Creatures, governs his.

And surely this Capacity of Knowledge may be lookt upon as a great and honourable Advantage; especially that of such a Knowledge as hath been mentioned. Knowledge finds the mind of Man pleasant and useful Employment; Which as it is an active and busie thing, must have such employment or 'tis uneasie and unhappy. Knowledge presents us with the Objects of our Happiness, and inables us to enjoy them. This is the light, and brightness, and beauty of the Mind; Ignorance is dark and deform'd, and leaves the Soul unpolisht and ugly; Ignorance like darkness, is uncomfortable and sad; Knowledge, like the light, is chearing and delightful: This improves and raises the activity and freedom of the Mind, but Ignorance is clogg'd and wretchedly confin'd. Of Knowledge then it may be said, *It is more to be desired than Gold, yea, than much fine Gold:* But especially is that true of that Knowledge which the *Psalmist* speaks it of, that which presents to us the Rules of good living: Of which also *Solomon* speaks thus, *Happy is the Man that findeth wisdom, and the Man that getteth understanding; For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of Silver, and the gain thereof than fine Gold; She is more precious than Rubies, and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared to her,* Prov. 3. 13, 14, 15.

2. Another Capacity which greatly recommends the the Soul of Man is, That it is capable of Moral Qualifications. By which word I mean the glorious Vertues of Holiness and Justice, Goodness and Mercy, Faithfulness and Prudence. It is not only capable of knowing the Rules of these Vertues, but also of possessing the Vertues themselves, and of expressing them in our Actions. Our behaviour towards God may be adorn'd with the bright Rays of Faith, and Love of Piety and Devotion, of Reverence and Humility. Our behaviour towards Men may all be regulated and adorned with
Justice

Justice and Charity; Meekness and Sincerity; Goodness and Mercy. None of the other Creatures about us can be possess'd of such Qualifications: A Stone or a Beast cannot be just, or good, or faithful. A Beast does not know what its self does; it has not freedom of will, does not chuse any of its Actions, therefore cannot be vertuous or vicious. The Soul of Man has in this the Advantage of all the visible World, and when 'tis endowed with these Vertues, at least it is brighter and more glorious than the Sun or Stars. These render us like to God himself in the highest manner that a Creature is capable of. In these things consisted the best part of the Divine Image in Man before the unhappy Fall of our Nature in our first Parents? and tho' we then lost the things themselves, yet we did not lose the capacity of receiving them again: And when the Scripture speaks of the renewing or restoring that Image in us again, this is said to be done by enduing us with Righteousness and true Holiness. These are Excellencies which God ascribes to himself, which he glories in, and therefore it must be our greatest Advancement and Honour to be partakers of them; and it must be accounted an argument of great worth in the Soul of Man to be capable of such Honourable Ornaments.

3. It is another Argument of this, that the Soul of Man is capable of enjoying a very high and honourable kind of Happiness, even the best that any Creatures can attain to. When the *Manna* which the Children of *Israel* were fed with in the Wilderness is called Angel's Food, it is intimated, that this wonderful Provision, did as a Figure represent, that Mankind are capable of the same Happiness with the glorious Angels, and all holy and devoted Souls do in some measure partake of it in this Life. By virtue of his Soul is every Man, even from the Prince to the Beggar, capable of a Spiritual and Eternal Felicity.

As this is a Spirit, it has a very high sense of things, and a very lively perception of Pleasure or Pain. No

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meer Body or Matter, however 'tis resign'd, or made up into an Animal, can have so great a sense of Pleasure or Happiness as a Spirit may, if it be proper to say that Matter has any at all. Matter, the best of it, is dull in comparison to a Spirit, and must be moved; but a Spirit is active and moves its self, and what is most capable of Action, is most capable of Happiness; for all Fruition consists in Action.

Farther, The Objects of our Happiness, are all spiritual things. By virtue of this Spirit in us we can delight in and enjoy such, which are the noblest and most excellent things in themselves, and are able to afford the greatest Pleasure. Sensible Objects have not that force with them, nor that Power to please, which spiritual things have, that are the delights and blissful enjoyments of wise and refined Spirits. Hence it must be said, that Mankind cannot fall into a greater or more unhappy mistake than to think that there is no Pleasure but in gratifying the Senses and Appetites of their Bodies with sensual Enjoyments; or that this is the greatest Pleasure of any. This in truth is not worthy the Name of Pleasure, if it be compared with the delight which a rectified Mind can take in spiritual Objects and Enjoyments. Farther, it is doubtless the greatest thing in Happiness, and that which adds much to it still, how great soever it was before, That the Being which enjoys it, can reflect upon it, and so can consider and know its self happy. This the Soul of Man can do, and none but a rational and spiritual Nature can do this. But since I have spoken of spiritual Things, as the chief Object of our Happiness, I shall particularly mention some them.

The Soul of Man can please its self highly in good and vertuous Actions; in those which we do our selves, and in those we see done by others. It is incomparably pleasant to view and consider the reasonableness and the fitness of these, to see how necessary and just they are, to consider how much gratitude towards God,
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and the Obligations we have received from him, do require them of Mankind; to consider the wisdom and vast advantages of them. Hence did a good Man acknowledge to God, *Thy Law is sweet to my taste, yea sweeter than hony to my mouth.* There is not any thing among Men so pleasant and charming to a rectified Soul, as are the vertuous and pious Actions and Behaviour of good Men: While the sensual Minds of others dote on a fair outside and fine cloaths, he sees, and takes a more just and true delight in the glory that dwels within, and darts out its rays in religious and good Actions.

The Soul of Man can take delight in the converse of holy, and wise, and kind Angels; those glorious Creatures that are the Beauty and Flower, as we may say, of the Creation. It can delight in what they are, in what they say, and in what they do, when it shall be admitted into their Society. And it is mentioned in Scripture as a part of that Felicity to which our conformity to the Laws of the Gospel does intitle, and will bring us, That we shall enjoy hereafter the Society of *an innumerable company of Angels*, as well as that of *the spirits of just Men made perfect, and of God the judge of all*, Heb. 12. 22. And very delightful it must needs be to good Men in this Life, to consider these noble Creatures, and to know that they are *Ministring spirits* upon all occasions *sent forth to Minister for the good of the Ele&*; To consider that whilst he is holy and vertuous, he is a delight to them, they love to be about him, and they have the charge of him to keep him in all his ways; and he is accordingly the object of their continual Care, and they are most willing to do for him all the Offices of kindness that he has occasion for.

Farther, the Soul can enjoy after a very pleasing and satisfying manner the ever-Blessed God, who is an infinite unmeasurable Good, a boundless Ocean of Excellencies and Perfections: It can delight in all the discover'd
Glories

Glories of this Incomprehensible Being; and in considering him it is transported with pleasure, while it finds it self, in the utmost stretch of its Faculties, lost in the Infinite Incomprehensible Object. And this Happiness, the enjoyment of God, may in some measure begin in this Life. A most ravishing Pleasure the Soul can take to consider what this Excellent Being has said of himself in Holy Scripture, and what discoveries he daily makes of himself in his Works. When it can view in some of these his wonderful Wisdom and Power, in others large and bounteous Goodness, in others awful and bright Justice and Righteousness. And when to these Meditations it can add the sweet thought, that this God is reconciled, that it is a Favourite of Heaven, then it must needs be as the *Psalmist* said, *My Meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.*

And then, if to all this we add, that this great Object of the Soul's Happiness will endure for ever, and so will also the lesser ones that have been mentioned; that being spiritual in their Nature, they are all of them Eternal and Unchangeable, they will never cease to Be, nor cease to be delightful and pleasing: If we consider that the Soul its self by its Immortal Nature is capable to be for ever blest with the Enjoyment of these Objects; we shall from hence see that we are capable of an Everlasting Happiness; of such as shall never be interrupted, never decay nor diminish, never come to an end: We are capable of living beyond all reach of thought, beyond all measure of duration, amidst unfading Pleasures, unspeakable Joys, and a pure and perfect Felicity. Oh that Men were so wise as to consider these things! Thus much, and more than we can now conceive, our Souls are made capable to enjoy. And these things, all of them together at least, I think do sufficiently prove the great Worth and Excellency of the Soul of Man.

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And certainly, if the *things* which have been now said were duly considered; if they had their just and due Influence upon Mankind, they would exceedingly alter and amend the lives and actions of a great many Men. They would make us act more suitable to the dignity and worth of our Souls, and with more regard to their Interest and Happiness than we commonly do. And in particular these things following the Influence of them upon us would effect and cause. They would make us very Pious towards God, and thankful for what he has made us; they would make us prefer our Souls before our Bodies; and ambitious of attaining those Divine and honourable Accomplishments which we are in our Nature capable of, they would make us very Industrious to gain the happiness which we were originally, and in our Nature designed for. In these things I shall set before you the due Use and Improvement of what has been said on this Subject.

1. Let us with great Thankfulness acknowledge to the Creatour, what he has made us, and praise him for his Bounty towards us. Let us consider and own it is *God that hath made us, and not we our selves*. It is one part of thankfulness to acknowledge the Benefits we have received. Let us own this, and endeavour to render to God all that which is due from us for it; To shew forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to his service. Let each of us heartily say within himself, *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, bless his Holy Name: Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not his benefits*. We may hereupon very justly thus expostulate with, and admonish our selves: Have I a power to think, and shall my Thoughts neglect the excellent Being that gave it me? Should he be seldom in my Thoughts by whom I constantly think? How base and ungrateful a Character of a Man is this, *That God is not in all his thoughts!* Am I capable of Knowledge, and shall it not be my greatest Ambition to know him that made

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me so, to know the most excellent of all Beings, that I might thereby be enabled to render him the homage that belongs to him? Have I a Will to chuse good, and shall I fix my choice on any thing before him? Shall I not cleave to him, by my Will, who is the chiefest Good, and who gave me this power for that purpose! Should I not always say it to him, as the full sense of my Soul, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none on Earth that I can desire besides thee!* Shall I not pay him the Homage of my Affections from whom I have them, and the Reason that I have wherewith to guide them! I ought to love him above all things, to fear him alone, to entertain my Hope with the pleasing expectations of enjoying him: I should be angry only with that which provokes his Anger, and hate what he hates and forbids. Thus ought we to admonish our selves upon this Foundation, and to resolve accordingly. Thus should we endeavour to honour him who hath crowned us with such Dignity and Honour.

2. What has been said concerning the Excellency of our Souls, should make all Men prefer them before their Bodies, and chiefly regard them. The Soul of Man is plainly the chief and most important part of him, as it is a Spirit and Immortal.

This ought then to have the chief Dominion in us. All the Apperites and Passions of the Inferior Body ought to be subject to the Faculties of the Mind. We should not suffer our Senses, or the desires of the Flesh to force Objects and Thoughts upon the Mind, but make it rather to chuse its own employment upon consideration and advice of our Judgment and Reason. How much Folly and Sin would such a Course prevent? And it highly becomes and concerns us to give this as absolute a Dominion in us as we can, that it may not be clogg'd or biassed by particular Temper or Constitution. The Obedience to Temper is a most effectual Hinderance both of Wisdom and Religion.

No Man can govern himself well, that does not set his Reason above his Constitution, and make his Temper subject to the Rules of That and of Religion. I confess that in some cases some severity towards the Body may be necessary to this purpose; and a great deal of Self-denial and Mortification may be requisite to the bringing our selves to this. But let us observe what our Saviour says to this Case. *If thy right Hand (says he) offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is better for thee to enter into Life maimed, than having two Hands to be cast into Hell Fire.* We were better wrong the Flesh, if that must be, than to endanger the Spirit, and a little hurt the Body than damn the Soul. To bring our selves to this State of the Bodies absolute and compleat subjection to the Mind, is of so great use and advantage, as that 'tis worth all that it can cost us: For so we shall become free and easie in all our Actions; we shall possess and enjoy our own Souls; we shall will to do what we should, and shall do it the more readily, and do it the better and the more perfectly: Thus shall a Man have the greatest Comfort in his Actions, He shall exercise the brighter Vertues, and obtain by them the more praise and favour with God and Man.

Let us prefer our Souls above our Bodies, and chiefly mind the Interests of them. We should make the Interests of the Body stand by, when they come into competition with those of the Soul. We should govern our selves in all things as far as this can be done with a chief regard of these. It were but just and fitting, and due to our selves, that we govern our selves so, in what we chuse to love or hate, in what we pursue or avoid; and that it be the grand business of our Lives to promote the advantage of our Immortal Souls.

3. Let us be greatly ambitious of those Divine and high Qualifications that we have been made capable to possess: Since we may be wise and holy, just and good, faithful and prudent; let us earnestly endeavour to be so,

fo. To be endowed with these Vertues, is to put on the greatest excellency and worth. The Scripture very justly says, *The righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour.* These Vertues in truth are the greatest, and the most becoming Ornaments: These make the brightest and most lasting Beauty; such as Angels love, and God himself takes delight in. These will encrease, and not fade or decay with Time, and will last to Eternity. These are the truest, and the most useful Riches: they do in a sense deliver the Soul from Hell, and entitle it to everlasting Blessedness. These are not uncertain Riches, but are such a sure and durable Possession, as Moth and Rust cannot corrupt, nor can Thieves break through to, and steal them: These in the Exercises of them in good Works, do lay up a Treasure in Heaven. Let it be consider'd, that as we are capable of these Vertues, we are also capable of being the Subjects of the contrary Vices: And that if we are not vertuous and holy, we must needs be vicious and impious: He that is not just and true in his dealings, must be unjust and perfidious: He that is not merciful and good, must be hard-hearted and cruel: And as we are acceptable and lovely to God by those Vertues in us, so we are odious and detestable with these Vices. *The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but he loveth him followeth after Righteousness.* The pure Angels abhor Sinners, and do not care to be near them, to see what is so odious and offensive as the Sins of Men are to them. As Holiness and Vertue do exalt, and honour, and become us, so does Wickedness, and Impiety debase and disparage us; These latter deform us into the likeness of the Devil, and so make us truly more vile than the Beasts that perish. So much reason is there that we earnestly endeavour, then, to adorn our Souls with Piety and Vertue.

4. And *Lastly*, The Excellency and Immortality of our Souls should make us greatly concerned to secure and attain for them an everlasting Happiness. Since

we are capable of such an one, we should not rest till we have some good assurance of it. It would become us, and were our Wisdom to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, as the Apostle advises: We should work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Let every Man, then, take it into his most deliberate Thoughts what shall become of him to all Eternity. Let this be a great concern with us all: When this frail Tabernacle of my Body shall be taken down (in which my Soul now dwells) where then shall my poor banish'd Soul abide? Where, Oh where shall that be then disposed of? To what company shall I go, or I cannot be happy alone? And what good things shall I then enjoy, for I have not a self-sufficiency within me? I am told, and assured of two very different States after this Life; the one of perfect Happiness, and the other of perfect Misery: To which of these two States am I likely to be doom'd? Since I am immortal, and must abide for ever in that I am sent to, it greatly concerns me to know which of them it shall be. The one is designed for good Men, and the other for the bad: Which is it then of these two Characters that I bear? Since the course of my Life has a certain tendency towards the one or the other of these, and I shall fare hereafter according as I have lived here; let me consider well what a course I take. Am I fit to dwell in the kind and loving World above, if I harbour any Malice, or Envy, or Hatred in my Heart? Am I fit for the pure Mansions of Heaven, if I live in sensual and brutish Sins? Am I fit to live with those who are all faithful and true, with the God of Truth and Righteousness, if I am deceitful and unjust, and had rather be cunning than sincere? Am I fit to be in the presence of God, and in the company of those that reverence and adore him, if I am habitually prophane, and accustomed to despise all things that are sacred, and to abuse the awful Name of God, in vain Oaths and Perjuries? Am I fit to leave this World, and to be happy out of

it, if my Heart be so set upon it, that I can love, I can relish and delight in nothing but what is of this World?

If this be my Condition, and this has been my course of Life, certainly, this will not bring me to Heaven. If a Man finds, then, that it has been thus with him, he should resolve to stop and divert his course. Since *without holiness no Man shall see God*, we must follow after these Divine Qualifications that have been mentioned as things necessary to our everlasting Happiness. We must *cease to do evil, and learn to do well*; and devote our selves to the Service of God in a course of universal Obedience to his Commands; we must repent of our past Sins, that they may be blotted out; we must purifie our selves as God is pure: *Blessed* (says our Saviour) *are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*: We must cleanse our selves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the fear of God; and present our selves, and our repentance, and obedience, all in the Name of Jesus Christ, hoping for acceptance through him, and for the favour of God to be bestowed upon us only for his sake.

Let it be consider'd, that we must either dwell with God and his holy Angels in everlasting Joy and Bliss, or be doom'd to the Prisons of the Devils, and confin'd to dwell with enraged, and wicked and spiteful Companions. If we must not dwell in the Regions of Light, we shall be dismissed to the gloomy Caves of everlasting Darkness. If we are not admitted to the Joys, and Hymns, and Praises of Heaven; we shall be condemn'd to the Howlings and Discords, and Torments of Hell, and there bear a sad part our selves in those everlasting Sorrows. There is no middle State, but the one or the other of these will be our everlasting and unalterable Portion. Life and Death are set before us, and we have leave to chuse between them; But it is so, That if we will not chuse Life, we shall not be at Liberty to refuse Death. If we do not chuse Life, and

Happiness

Happiness, and earnestly and steadily engage in the Course that leads to it, we must fall into the other; destruction and Misery will come of themselves. *How shall we escape, says the Apostle, if we neglect so great Salvation?*

Let it be consider'd, that we must determine our choice between these two things, while our present Life lasts; not a moment more will be allowed us to do it in; and this Life is of uncertain duration, and most certainly is hastning away. It is best for us therefore to hasten our choice in this Matter, and to be very constant and steady in the way to Happiness, when we have chosen that: Which, that we may do, *God of his Infinite Mercy grant, through the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

The P R A Y E R.

O Eternal and Almighty God! Before the Mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the Earth, or the World, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Thy duration is without beginning or end, and thou art the Author and End of all things besides thy self. It is thou, O Lord, that hast made us, and not we our selves: Thou hast sent us into this World to enjoy it a while; to study, and see Thee in the things about us; to praise Thee for their Excellency and Goodness; to love Thee for them, and more than them, as being the Fountain and Center of all that Goodness, which is scattered and dispersed among them: And thou hast made us for the high and noble Happiness of enjoying thy self. O Lord, how great and good things hast thou designed us for, and how low and mean things do we confine our selves to! We are ashamed to think how seldom we think of thee; we use thy Creatures, and thy Gifts, and forget thy Self; we are charmed and detained with that little Goodness that is in them, and neglect that infinite Abundance which is in Thee; we commonly make

but a low animal use of the things of this World, considering in them only their suitableness to the Appetites and Necessities of our Bodies, and valuing and delighting in them only for that; and so they do not raise up our minds to Thee: And thus it comes to pass, that we seek none but these things; we live as if we were not made capable of better; we seek our Happiness where it is not, and neglect it where it is; we hew out to our selves broken Cisterns, that can hold no water, and forsake Thee the Fountain of living Waters: In Thee alone is true content, and full satisfaction to be found. O Lord, as sensible of this our very guilty and very dangerous Errour; we desire for the future to return unto Thee; to esteem Thee our chiefest Good, and to desire Thee above all things: Our Hearts are now ready to say each of us for our selves, Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me praise his holy Name: We desire, O Lord, to praise and to honour Thee with all the excellent Faculties and Powers that Thou hast given us: We devote our Reason and Understanding to Thee, to learn and meditate on thy glorious Excellencies, thy wonderful Works, and the instances of thy obliging Goodness: We devote all the power of our wills to Thee; to chuse Thee, to fix upon Thee, as our chief Good; to submit to thy Will, as the Rule and Law of ours. We devote our Affections, to love thee above all things, to fear and reverence thee, to hope and trust in thee, to hate what thou hatest, and love what thou dost love. We devote all our Members unto thee, to be governed by thy wise and righteous Laws. We desire, O Lord, we purpose to love and serve Thee the Eternal, Infinite, and most Bounteous Good, with all our Heart, and Soul, and Strength: O Lord, strengthen we pray thee, and confirm our too feeble and wavering Resolutions. Create thou us again in Christ Jesus unto good works. Let us not live estranged from Thee, whom we are made capable to enjoy, both here and hereafter. Make us in love with Holiness and Vertue, as the health and rectitude of our Minds, as our brightest and most advantageous Ornaments, and the most useful, and most durable Riches. Renew in us, most loving Father, thy decayed Image, and create us to Righteousness and true Holiness. Learn us to see thy glorious Perfections in the visible things about us, to make a Religious use of all that we enjoy

in this World, in loving Thee for what is good, praising thee for what is Excellent in them, and giving Thee Thanks for whatever we enjoy of them.

We humbly recommend to thy infinite Mercies all Estates and Conditions of Men: O Lord, Lover of Souls, pity those that sit in Darknes, and bless them with the Knowledge of Thee, and of thy Christ, whom to know is Life everlasting; rescue them from their miserable Bondage under the Enemy of Mankind, and bring them into the Kingdom of thy Son. We pray Thee bless and defend the Christian Church; let the Gifts and Graces of thy good Spirit be abundantly poured out upon it; purge it from all things displeasing to Thee, and give it peace, and great enlargement. Be merciful to that part of it which thou hast planted amongst us in these Nations: water it plentifully with the Dew of thy Heavenly Blessing; make it fruitful in all good Works, and a Praise in the Earth: We pray thee bless our Sovereign Lady the Queen, and all subordinate Magistrates, and those that are the Ministers of thy holy Word and Sacraments; make them all in their several Places and Stations, useful to the promoting Piety and Vertue amongst us. And make all those that are under them, peaceable and obedient, teachable, and submissive to their Laws and godly Counsels. Grant that we may all lead peaceable and quiet Lives in all Godliness and Honesty. Visit and relieve all those that are in any Trouble or Affliction. Bless our Relations, requite our Friends and Benefactors; and forgive our Enemies, Persecutors, and Slanderers, and turn their Hearts.

Finally, O Father of Mercy, we give Thee Thanks for all thy Care of our Immortal Souls, for all that thou hast done for their Happiness and Welfare: We pray Thee, bless to our spiritual Advantage those Ordinances of thine, which we have this day been partakers of. Give us leave to commit our selves to thy Protection for this Night, and reward our trust in Thee, with safe and comfortable Rest; that being well refresh'd, we may return the next Morning chearfully to our several Businesses and Duties; and do thou accept us in all, we pray, through Jesus Christ, in whose Name we present our selves, and all our poor Services unto Thee; and in whose most comprehensive Words we conclude these our imperfect Prayers, saying, *Our Father, &c.*

OF
Vain THOUGHTS,
 OR
INCONSIDERATION:
 WITH
The Mischiefs and Remedies.

Let us Pray;

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Psalm 119. 113.

I hate Vain Thoughts, but thy Law do I love.

OUR Care and Endeavour to live well must begin within us, or it will prove vain and ineffectual. We must keep the Heart with all diligence, for out of it are the Issues of Life, Solomon says, Prov. 4. 23. According to which, our Saviour teaches us, That out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and out of the good or evil treasure there, proceed good or evil actions. We must then take notice what our Thoughts

Thoughts are, if we would have our Life good, and not neglect them, as Men too commonly do; and this is what the *Psalmist* plainly intimates in these Words; *I hate vain thoughts, but thy Law do I love.*

I shall not trouble you with long criticizing upon the words, lest I should be guilty my self of what I intend to discourse against. It shall suffice to observe for the justifying of our Translation, that the Original word here translated *Thoughts*, is used with that significancy in other places of Scripture; particularly, 1 *Kings* 18. 21. Where it seems to signifie unsettled, and irresolute Thoughts; such as could not determine them to a fixed and steady Obedience to the Truth; and in *Job* 4. 13. where it signifies such Thoughts as the roving Imaginations of the Night are wont to be employed in: In both these places it signifies such as are not well guided nor directed. And by reason of this use of the word in those places, I doubt not but it is very fitly done, that our Translators have added the word *Vain* in the Text, to determine, and signifie what sort of Thoughts the *Psalmist* meant by the use of the word here. I shall therefore understand this Text, according to the import of the word *Vain* in our Language; and shall represent it as signifying thus much: I hate all idle, roving, and useless Thoughts, such as are not considerate, and designed, and directed to some good and worthy purpose, all inconsiderate Thinking. As there are a great many idle, impertinent words spoken among Mankind; many very useless and unprofitable conversations; and as there are, especially in the briskness and activity of Childhood and Youth, a great many very idle, and trifling actions done by us; so there are in most of us, much rather a vast multitude of idle and useless Thoughts; there is a great deal of inconsiderate Thinking among Men; Every Man that will but carefully observe himself, may find that his Mind is always busie, that it frames a multitude of Thoughts, and entertains its self with

them; but that a great many of these are apt to be undirected and unchosen ones. The vain and inconsiderate Mind acts within it self, and thinks without government of its self, and frames Thoughts just as a Tree shoots forth many superfluous and unbearing Branches: And the Word here translated Thoughts, does sometimes in the Sacred Language signifie such Branches of a Tree. One therefore very fitly calls Vain Thoughts, *Surculi mentis infructuosi*, (*Stearn, de Obstin.* pag. 224.) the fruitless Suckers of the Mind.

Such employment of the Mind as this, and the Temper which is apt to produce it, the *Psalmist* said, *he hated; but the Law of God he loved.* To study and meditate on that, to learn it, that he might conform his Life and actions to it; to conform his Mind and Life to that Rule he desired; but these roving, unguided Thoughts, he hated: And by this setting thus these two together, he plainly intimates their opposition to each other; that he hated Vain Thoughts, as contrary to the due observance of the Law of God, and a hindrance of that.

To make the Discourse on this Subject as serviceable as I can, I shall,

1. Endeavour to make it more plain and evident, what sort of Thoughts, or what a Disposition of Mind the *Psalmist* here speaks of, and I shall discourse against.

2. To shew the Mischief of these.

3. To propose the proper Remedies of them.

In the First place, that I may render it plain and evident, what I do at present discourse against, and so may convince every Man, that there is such a Distemper of Mind as I speak of, which all of us are liable to, and which we may call, The Vanity of the Mind, or Inconsideration: I shall give you some Instances of Vain Thoughts, which are common among Men, and in which this Temper of Mind is wont to exercise its self.

And

And *First*; Such are those Thoughts, which have no designed end nor purpose. A multitude of these is apt to entertain our Minds. There are very few Men, if any, but if they look back upon themselves, after they have been a good while thinking, they would often find that their Minds had been engaged in such employment, as they can give no reasonable or good account of. If the Mind be not set to business it employs its self, but without design, and without fruit; it is busie still, and always so; but often very idly busie and employed, as we may justly speak: It is true, there may be some relaxations of the Mind, and these are necessary to the Health of the Body, and to relieve the Animal Spirits, that would be too much spent and disturbed with continual commanded thinking; this is necessary to the better performance of our Tasks of Duty when we set about them: At some times the Thoughts must be unbent (as we may speak) that is, not directed nor confined to any particular Employment or Duty. But that which is condemned is this; when a Man's Mind is habitually so; when it is never, nor can well be fixed to any good purpose; when a Man ordinarily spends a great deal of time thus relaxed, and so neglects his Duty, or through the wandering levity of his Mind, performs it ill: Especially does it condemn an idle, unprofitable course of Life; when a Man never sets himself to any honourable or useful Business or Employment. As how great is the multitude of those, who thus live at ease (as a very pious Man laments in a sad Catalogue of the Sins of our times) who rather pass away their time, than they do live; who are every way unprofitable; who have no tasks of Duty to God, or of goodness and serviceableness to Mankind ever in their Thoughts, or in their Hands! Yea, in our degenerate Age it has been counted gentile and noble, according to the mode of the times, to have nothing to do, to be idle and useless; (tho' thanks be to God we have better

ter Examples over us now, from whence we hope a wiser and nobler Fashion will take place.) And indeed the soft Education of many under the management of an indulgent Mother, who is her self perhaps as useless as one that *is dead, while she liveth*; 1 Tim. 5. 6. does betray them to a contemptible worthlessness; while the little *Master* must learn no more than it pleases, 'tis a chance whether he learns any thing or not: If the Child happen to have a good natural Judgment, and to discern the necessity, and usefulness, and credit of good Accomplishments betimes, then he has some; but otherwise he shall forsake his Tutor that teaches, for his Livery Boy that flatters him, and then the Gentleman is no better accomplisht than the Beggar: and with such Persons the Thoughts, Words and Actions of their whole life are in a sort undirected and unguided; they live by no Rule, and they think and act by chance; and as the Objects that present themselves, or as the motions of Lusts, and sensual Appetites lead them; just as other Animals live.

Again, We may often catch our selves at the vain Suppositions of what is perhaps never likely to come to pass; thinking needlessly, what if such or such a thing should be, when there does not appear even the least probability of it: We are often supposing our selves in the Circumstances which there is no likelihood, or perhaps no possibility of our coming into; and then tormenting or pleasing our selves with the thoughts of them, according to what they are. One fancies himself a King, and pleases his Thoughts with the great and splendid circumstances of such a Condition; and if he be an angry, revengeful Man, he is killing his Enemies; if he be good-natured and beneficent, he is advancing and preferring his Friends. Another it may be, in his Melancholy Mood, is fancying himself a Beggar, and is gratifying himself with the ease and carelessness of such a Condition, or afflicting himself with the Thoughts of the contempt and wretchedness
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which belong to it. Often do we lose a great deal of Time, and many Thoughts, in musing upon the Condition we desire, and design, and may probably come into, before it comes.

Again, Of this sort too, are those Thoughts for the most part, which correct, and censure the Carriage of other Men in the Stations different from our own: As when private Men will be directing a King how to Govern, and they that sit at home will be teaching a General abroad, how to order his Marches and Battels. When we study the Duties of other Men rather than our own, and censure what we cannot understand, we are then very vainly and fruitlessly employed. All consideration and study of the Duty of others in their places, is vain and impertinent; but when it is intended, and directed to the instructing of our selves, for our own good behaviour in those Circumstances, when they are such as we are in, or are likely to come into: Or when our Neighbour, whom we censure, is such an one, as we may be supposed able to advise, and direct him; and whom it is not a thing above us to pretend to direct as it is certainly above the Subject to direct, and dictate to his Governours in Church or State.

Farther, the Thoughts that are unseasonable, and do interrupt us in our present Duty, whatever it is, are in that respect vain Thoughts; and these proceed from the Vanity of the Mind, these are commonly at that time unconsidered and unchosen; and such as the roving of the Mind accidentally falls upon. But if they are chosen and designed at such an unseasonable time, yet are they vain and fruitless, because they divert a Man from that which is his present Duty; they either hinder him from doing it at all, or from doing it well. Such are the Thoughts of worldly Affairs and Businesses, which may be lawfull enough, and fitting at another time, when we are or should be engaged in the worship of God, and in Exercises of Devotion; and doubtless such may also

be those that are upon Divine and Religious Matters, when Men are in the Affairs of an honest Calling; as when they intrude and mingle themselves so with a Man's Business, as to disturb his Mind, to beat him off from, or hinder the due performance of it. We are not bound to be actually thinking of God and Heaven, or the Day of Judgment, at all times, or to have our Discourse, when we are in Company, always taken up with Speculations in Religion, which some unjustly appropriate the Name of good Discourse to. It is good Discourse to direct, and advise, and assist one another in our Duty of any kind; and then it is good Discourse which does direct or encourage a Neighbour in his worldly Business and Calling, in its proper Season. They have a wrong Notion of Religion (and it is just such an one as that of the Papists, when they call a Monkish Life by way of Eminence, a Religious one) who think no Thoughts or Discourse good or religious, but when the Mysteries of our Religion, or our future hopes, and passages of Scripture are the Subject of them. A Man may be religious in the Actions, and so in the Thoughts about the meanest Trade; because he may do all that he does to the Glory of God; and he does in his worldly Business, that which God has commanded, and set him to do; accordingly the Thoughts about those things, so far as they are necessary, and in their season, are dutiful, obedient and religious ones; they are such as Religion does allow, and indeed oblige a Man to have. He that should neglect his Trade, tho' it was the meanest Handicraft, to meditate on Divine things; or that should do his work ill, by reason of having his Mind unseasonably employed and taken up with these things, would transgress as truly as he that should neglect the due acknowledgment of God to apply himself to his worldly Business, or should perform the worship of
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God slightly, by reason of having his Mind wandering from that to his worldly Business.

In a word, those Thoughts which are loose, and undirected, which do no way concern our Duty, or which do impertinently divert us from present Duty, they come under the name of Vain Thoughts: And these were they which *David* hated; together with, by consequence, that vain, roving, inconsiderate Disposition of Mind, which produces them. Thus much may suffice to shew distinctly what it is the *Psalmist* speaks of.

The next part of our Business is, to justify this good Man's Hatred of this unhappy Disposition of Mind, and these Exercises of it: The reason of which his Hatred of them, he intimates to be their contrariety to the due observance of the Law of God. And that this is the mischievous Nature of them will fully appear by these two things. 1. They are a mighty hinderance of doing Good. 2. They greatly expose, and commonly betray a Man into the doing of Evil.

1. This Disposition of Mind must needs be a great hinderance of all good and worthy Actions. Some are so foolish, as even to affect this Disposition, to endeavour, cherish, and indulge a roving, unfixed Thought: They allow, and follow all the wild Freaks of the Imagination; and this is the admir'd Wit of our Times. But the Imagination is the wildest, and most ungovernable, and dangerous Faculty in the Mind of Man, and it cannot chuse but be very unhappy for any Man to indulge it, and give himself up to follow it. Such as do so, are commonly Lawless in their Opinions and Manners: they are not capable of any fixed Principles, or of a steady Course of Actions, and by consequence, they cannot set themselves to any useful, or creditable way of living. Hence we often see the great Wits of the Times good for nothing; they can squander away their Time, their Health,

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and Estate, but cannot get any good, or do any; and doubtless, to be thus a Wit, is to be a Fool.

The inconsiderate, and wandering Disposition of Mind, is a great hinderance of all the Improvement of the Mind, and of furnishing it for honourable and good Actions. A Man under the power of this, can never study his Duty carefully, cannot learn or understand the Laws and Rules of the several Vertues; therefore he knows not how, or what it is to do well. He can never seriously ponder, and deliberately consider the motives, and inducements to do well; and therefore these have no force upon him, and then he must needs live a wild, and ungovern'd Life, he cannot be vertuous and good, unless he could be so by chance; and indeed an House may be regularly built by chance, or an excellent Discourse be compos'd accidentally, by the throwing of the Letters carelessly together, as well as Man can live a wise and well-compos'd and good Life, without consideration: And herein lies, I doubt not, one ground of the common differences between Man and Man; especially between those who have equal advantages for Improvement. One Man steadily fixes, and applies his Mind to some good purpose, to serve God and Man in some particular way of living, and he is of some use in the World; Another applies his Mind to no one thing, and he is good for nothing. So when several Men enjoy the same means of Grace and Goodness; one becomes good and religious, and another receives no Benefit at all by them: The reason is, because the one uses them with design to improve by them, and with careful application of his Mind to the obtaining this end; the other has no care or endeavours about this matter: His roving and vain Imaginations leave no room for better Thoughts; they do not give him leave to attend to and consider the precepts and Rules of Religion and Vertue, till his Mind is formed by them. These things have their Influence upon

upon us, by our serious, and deliberate Meditation upon them. 'Tis true, the Spirit of God is the efficient Cause of all that is good in us; but in grown Persons, he works in, and by, the exercise of their own Thoughts, upon the rules and the motives of Virtue, and Religion; and we must be our selves the Instruments, as well as the Subjects of his Operations in us. It is therefore, that God has appointed the preaching of his Word to be the ordinary means of making Men religious and vertuous: that thereby those things which may direct, and persuade them to be so, may be proposed, and set before them, with strong Reason, and earnest Exhortation. Thus then is the Vanity, or Inconsiderateness of the Mind, a mischievous Quality, and worthy the Hatred of him who desires to be good; as it hinders Men from being good, and by consequence from doing well.

2. It is very mischievous too, as it does exceedingly expose Men to do Evil, and often betrays them into Sin: And this Effect it has, by these two ways.

1. As this Vanity of Mind abandons a Man to his Inclinations.

2. As it exposes us to the Influence of Temptations.

1. This inconsiderate Vanity of the Mind abandons a Man to his Inclinations: It makes him follow these instead of leading them, and to obey what he should govern; whatever the Inclinations of a Man are, the Vanity of the Mind carries him after them, and they are mostly to Evil. The ungoverned thoughts are usually employed by the reigning Sin, and the Man shall be musing on that, and be guilty of it in his Heart, when he has not opportunity of committing it in overt Acts. The covetous Man's idle Thoughts are all upon Gain and good Bargains, or great Losses. The proud Man's ungoverned Thoughts are extolling himself, magnifying every good Quality in him, if he has any, into a Mountain's Bulk, and diminishing his most enormous Faults; they are despising others,

thers, and preferring him above them. Thus do these Thoughts usually actuate and exercise in the Mind the prevailing Vice; and so our vain Thoughts become sinful ones: When they are inconsiderate, they will not be only so, but will be angry, proud, prophane, unclean, or any thing else that is ill, according to the inward Character or Tincture of the Mind; And then such Thoughts as these do cherish and strengthen these inclinations, which ought to be mortified, and subdued; they make them the less governable, and ready, and apt to break out into suitable Actions, when temptation and opportunity are offer'd.

2. This State of Mind mightily exposes a Man to the Influence of Temptations; for it renders him always ready to receive them. *He that hath no Rule over his spirit, says Solomon, is like a City that is broken down, and without Walls, Prov. 25. 28.* The Enemy of our Souls will easily send in his black Troops of wicked Suggestions, if we are not continually well guarded against him. And what shall hinder an inconsiderate Man from receiving any manner of Temptations? The Adversary has not so little craft as to awaken him to consider what he does by tempting to the most enormous kinds or degrees of wickedness at first: No, he draws the careless Sinner on to these by the Steps of lesser Sins. He watches to do mischief, and goes *about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour*; and the vain, ungovern'd Mind is a ready Prey to him. If we will not govern our selves well, we leave our selves to him, and he will govern us ill; and unless God's restraining Grace prevent, he will lead us captive at his will. This Enemy of our Souls, will sow his Tares there while we sleep, and are careless. He perfectly knows our Inclinations too, and what to suggest, that shall most effectually prevail with us, and so does the more certainly draw us into Sin and Wickedness.

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Thus we are in continual Danger from intestine, and external Foes, and therefore we cannot be careless of our selves, but they will prevail over us, and draw us into Sin. And these Thoughts which Men are apt to think very innocent ones, and to neglect as not worth their minding, we may see do expose and betray us into such Thoughts, and by consequence dispose us for such Actions as are sinful: And that Temper of Mind, which some affect, and are proud of, as if it were Wit, does prove but Madness and Folly, it is not only unprofitable but also very hurtful, and the School where this is best profest and may best be learnt is a Bedlam. Thus much may suffice to the Second Part of this Discourse, which was to shew the mischief of allowing, and entertaining Vain Thoughts.

I shall now in the last place propose the proper Remedies of this Vanity and Inconsiderateness of Mind: And let none think that to do so, is an impertinent, or Vain Task; for as the mischief, and danger of it is great, so the disease is common. As the Imagination is a faculty natural to the Mind of Man, so all Men are more or less subject to the giddiness of it, and liable to be diverted from any good design, or to be disturbed, and hindered in the prosecution of it thereby. This Vanity of the Mind is a distemper common to the corrupted Nature. Now to remedy this then we must observe these things following, as absolutely necessary.

1. A Man must needs set himself some task, and employment. With an idle Life it is cherished, and will reign, and throw a Man into a thousand Enormities. Something to do, and a diligent application of the Mind to it, tames the unruly Thought, uses it to government, and makes it obedient and useful. Business mightily helps consideration; by exercise of thinking steadily to some one purpose designed, and chosen, a Man becomes habituated to the doing so, and is the more capable of fixing his Mind to any thing besides

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that. This evidently appears in the great and extensive Knowledge in all Matters, which we find in some that were bred to a Trade, and in the capacity which we see in many such to apply their Thoughts to any thing, and to learn, and make a good Judgment of all Matters. Those that have been so unhappy as to be taught nothing in their younger Years, who rather diverted themselves with the Teachers of some Trifles, than learnt any thing, have the more to learn now, and the more to do, when they can be convinced of the danger, the guilt, the contemptibleness of an idle Life. And how many wise, and great Ladies have employed their Time, and their Hands in working for the Poor, to their own immortal Honour with God and Man? Together with these Employments, such may very well mingle a set Task of publick, and private Devotion; and so keep the Mind well exercised, as much as it needs to be. But this leads me to another Remedy of this Distemper.

2. We must endeavour to furnish our Minds with good store of Sacred Knowledge. Ignorance and Vanity, as well as Idleness, doth and must needs dwell together. If we apply our selves to this accomplishment in the proper Seasons for it, that is, on the *Lord's-days*, and in the Intervals of business, and necessary Refreshment on other Days; we shall have of this endeavour after such Knowledge, a good Employment; and we shall be so long kept from Idle and Vain Thoughts. And then when a Man does know much, especially of Sacred things, his Mind will not want good and useful Objects to entertain its self with at any time, when he is at leisure for thinking: He needs not at any time be idle, but may be meditating on the Rules of Vertue, and good living; he may be applying them to his Actions, and examining, and regulating his Course of Life, encouraging himself in the good he finds, and rebuking himself for his Faults: He may be very profitably meditating on the perfections of the divine Nature, and thereby

thereby raising in himself all those pious, and devout Dispositions of Mind, which are a suitable acknowledgment of those Perfections. He may be often thinking of the World to come, to which all Mankind are hastening; and sending his Thoughts before him into Eternity, and musing upon those two different States, which will hereafter divide all Mankind between them; and in one or other of which, we must have our longest abode, even to all Eternity: These are Thoughts very fit to make the Mind wise and serious, and to cure the levity of it, and are certainly very good and profitable employment for it, when no duty requires its attendance. But he that is not acquainted with subjects worthy of his Thoughts, will still think too, and then he must needs think for the most part very idly and vain, or else very wickedly. His Thoughts will seldom be employed about that which is his Duty, nor will they be such as will dispose, or lead him to it.

3. We should accustom our selves frequently to review, and reflect upon our thoughts; to think what we have been thinking upon, and in what strain and way our Thoughts have been employed. Let us endeavour always to know what passes within us; what we do with our own Minds, how we employ their noble powers; and commune with our own Hearts, as the *Psalmist* advises. If we often do thus reflect upon our selves, we cannot be long idle, but we shall find our selves so, and so may rectify our selves; we shall apprehend our wanderings, and may prevent our wild Imaginations from polluting us with evil Thoughts, and such as would actuate, and cherish evil Inclinations; and without this frequent reflection, 'tis impossible but we shall be often drawn away. Besides, if we are wont to call our selves thus to account, we shall come to reverence our selves, as the Philosophers speak; we shall become desirous to be always able to give a good account to our own Consciences of the employment

ployment of our Thoughts; we shall be liable to an wholesome Shame, for all the Follies, and Vagaries of our Minds; and so by degrees, we shall easily cure, and prevent the Vanity of them.

4. *Lastly*, We should endeavour to accustom our selves to good and pious Ejaculations. Our constant dependance upon God and Obligations to him every moment, and our constant danger, and proneness to fall into Sin, do greatly require this; and without doubt it is a Rule of special Usefulness to cure the vanity, and levity of the Mind, and to make it always serious and wise, and directed to its main End, the glorifying of God. That which I mean by it, is this. Let us accustom our selves to make little short Addresses to God upon all occasions that occur to us; to which purpose the Holy Scripture affords us an abundant Supply. As for instance, When we awake in the Morning, to say, *I laid me down and slept, I awaked, for the Lord sustained me*: When the Light of the Day comes; *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, the Firmament sheweth his Handy-work*. When a Man goes forth about his Business; *Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my foot-steps slip not*. When we hear of any other Men's Faults and Sins; *Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil*. When we see Children; *One Generation shall praise thy Name unto another, and shall declare thy mighty Acts*. Thus we shall well employ our Minds; and besides, thus we may set the Lord always before us, as the Psalmist speaks; and so be possesst with such a constant Reverence of the Almighty, as shall make us careful of our Duty, and prevent this Idleness of Thoughts, and all the Mischiefs of it. Which Grace, that we may obtain, let us earnestly seek it of Almighty God, and joyn the constant use of this Means with all other that conduce towards it, that so we may glorifie God both with our Souls and Bodies which are his: *To whom with the Son and the Holy Spirit be all Honour and Glory world without end.* Amen.

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PRAYER.

O Lord, the Infinite and Eternal Spirit, and Father of Spirits; who searchest the Hearts, and triest the Reins of Men, and from whom no secrets are hid. Thou, O Lord, we believe, knowest us altogether, and thou seest our Thoughts, even afar off. We are ashamed to think how much vanity, and folly, and sin thou hast seen within us: How little our Minds have attended, and applied themselves to our Duty, and to the main end of our Beings, the living to thy Honour and Glory. How seldom this comes into our Thoughts; What we were made for, what the Creator justly expects from us. Hence are our Minds so often engaged in that which does not concern us, and that which will not at all profit us; and so often employed in gratifying and exercising inwardly some sinful, and foolish Inclination. While we neglect to set our Minds to that good Employment, which our Business and Duty give us, our Adversary the Devil, or our sinful Inclinations, or the evil Company of the World, find them very ill Employment. And from hence do our Lives and Actions, wretchedly, and shamefully wander from the ways of thy excellent Commandments. Thus we do, instead of serving Thee in Body, Soul, and Spirit, most unjustly, and unworthily sin against Thee in all. We ought to meditate on thy Law Day and Night, that we might bring forth fruit in due season; to study thy Law, and learn thy Statutes; but we have been those, that care not for the Knowledge of thy Ways, and therefore we have not followed thy Paths. This, our way, O Lord, is our folly, we condemn, we abhor our selves for it; and own our selves obnoxious to thy wrath, and deserving that thou shouldst reject us from thy Care; but since thy Goodness has yet been mindful of us, even while we forgot Thee; we hope thy Mercy will receive us, when we return unto Thee. Our Hope is in thy Word, which tells us, that to the Lord our God belong Mercies and Forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him. Forgive us then, O Lord

we pray Thee, all our transgressions, upon the account of that great Propitiation, and Atonement which is made for us, by the precious Blood of thy Son, our only Saviour; for his sake, look mercifully upon our Infirmities, and heal them. Vouchsafe to direct, sanctifie, and govern, both our Hearts and Bodies in the way of thy Law and in the works of thy Commandments. Cleanse thou the Thoughts of our Hearts, by the Inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may sincerely love Thee, and duly magnifie thy Holy Name, truly serving Thee with Soul and Body, which are thine. Lord, have mercy upon us, and write all thy Laws in our Hearts, we beseech thee: Enlighten our Darkness, cure our Ignorance with all necessary Knowledge of Thee, and of thy Christ: Change our Wills, and turn the bias of them from this World towards thy Self; from empty, and vain Goods, to full and substantial ones; from the pleasures of Sense, to the accomplishments of the Mind: Make us more indifferent about our outward Circumstances, and more concern'd about the inward state, and disposition of our Souls; and to account it our greatest Felicity to do well, to please Thee, and approve our selves unto Thee. Make our vain and light Minds serious and wise; furnish us with the Gifts of thy good Spirit for every good work; for Thou alone art the Giver of every Good, and every perfect Gift; it is by Thee alone, O Lord, that we can be enabled to please Thee; we alas! are not able of our selves to think a good Thought. Help us to set Thee always before us in the frequent Thoughts of Thee, and an habitual reverence, and fear of Thee, that a sense of thy continual presence, and observance, may restrain us from all evil, and encourage and quicken us to mind and do our Duty.

We humbly implore thy Mercy upon all Men: Convert unto thy Self all Jews, Turks, and Heathens; bring them from their several ways of Vanity, to know and worship Thee the only true God, by Jesus the true Christ and Mediator. Give the Heathen for an Inheritance, and the utmost parts of the Earth for a Possession to thy well-beloved Son. Give unto thy Church all that is necessary to it, to amend, and purge away what is amiss, and to supply what is defective in it, and to make it fruitful in all good Works; and that all who profess, and

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call themselves Christians, may have their Conversation such as becomes the Gospel.

Bless, we pray Thee, and defend these Nations in which we live : Bless us with a continuance of wise, and kind, and righteous Governours, and of loyal, peaceable, and obedient Subjects. Give peace in our Days, we humbly beseech Thee ; for there is none we rely upon to fight for us, but only thou, O God. Establish Truth among us for all Generations ; bring into the way of Truth, all such as have erred and are deceived. Remember in Mercy, all that are dear, and related to us. Give them things necessary for Life and Godliness. Guide them, O Lord, by thy Council through this World, and bring them at last unto thy Glory. Sanctify us by thy Word, which has been this day spoken to us, and promote in us thereby all Vertue and Godliness of living. Forgive the wandering of our Minds in our attendance upon Thee, and all other defects in our Duty, and comfort us with the light of thy Countenance. Be thou our gracious Protector this Night ; for in Thee alone do we put our Trust. And if it please Thee to allow another Day, and yet a longer time on Earth ; Grant that it may be spent in thy fear, and in a diligent and unwearied application to all that which is our Duty. This we humbly ask, and whatever thou seest to be most expedient for us, committing and resigning our selves entirely to thy Conduct and Disposal, and hoping in thy Mercy through Jesus Christ, to whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost, we desire to ascribe all Praise, and Glory, and Dominion, for ever and ever,

Our Father, &c.

OF
True HAPPINESS,
 Wherein it lies,
DEMONSTRATED.

Let us Pray;

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Psalms 4. 6, 7.

There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon us.

Thou hast put gladness in my Heart, more than in the time that their Corn, and their Wine encreased.

IT is the natural and common desire of Mankind to be happy, and is the End which they aim at, and propose to themselves in their several Pursuits and Endeavours. But, as the Psalmist speaks here, *There be many that say, who will shew us any good?* The many, the most of Men are at a great loss in this Matter, and do not know where their true Happiness lies, nor in what

what course or way to attain it. Their uncertainty in this Matter, is represented by these words of the *Psalmist*, and is too evidently seen in the common Practice of the World. The Humane Nature is the same in all Mankind; we have all of us reasonable, immortal Souls; we have all the same Capacities; and our Happiness rightly, and truly considered, must be, to all, the same; the same Object must make all Men Happy, and they must obtain that in the same way. But alas! how is the World distracted, and divided in the pursuit of Happiness; Some of them running one way after it, and some another, and the most of them neglecting, and diverting from the true Object. With some there is no Felicity like the heaping up of Wealth; like the sight of full Bags, or great Purchases; and they delight in nothing so much as in gainful Bargains: With others there is nothing so pleasant as to spend; and they delight in this as much as the others do in getting. The pleasures of this World are their beloved felicity; to eat and drink, and rise up to play. With others there is no Heaven like Honour and Command, the having Authority and Power among Men, the being courted, and sought to, respected and obeyed. With some, how great a Felicity is it to be fine, and to have all things about them so! To have themselves, their Houses, their Entertainments, and all that belongs to them gaudy and pompous, and much adorned. Thus are Mankind disperst, thus they wander in the pursuit of Happiness: And thus the many are taken up and employed in this great Concern.

Having express'd the Uncertainty, and intimated the wandering of the Generality in this Affair: The *Psalmist* next expresses what he sought as the Objects of Happiness, in these words, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon us.* Which is as much as to say, Lord, let us have an Interest in thy Favour, regard us with Kindness and Love; let us enjoy the Exercises and Benefits of thy peculiar Favour and Mercy. It might

might be shewn you by the use of this Phrase in other places of Scripture, that this is the sense and meaning of it.

When he had made this request, he adds the Reason of it in the following words of the Text; *Thou hast put gladness in my Heart, more than in the time that their Corn and their Wine encreased.* Which words intimate, that he had received more Joy and Gladness from what enjoyment of the light of God's Countenance had been afforded him, than any others could ever derive from their Corn and Wine, or from the greatest Encrease of them. He intimates that God is the true Object of our Happiness; that the Favour of God express and exercised towards us, is a far better Spring and Source of Content and Comfort, than the Profits and Pleasures of this World can be. We may reckon that this is what we are taught in these words.

It shall be the Business of the present Discourse chiefly to prove this which is here intimated to us; To shew that *David* was certainly in the right, and was well directed when this was his choice, and the chief desire of his Soul to enjoy an interest in the Favour of God.

The proof of this we shall abundantly derive from these two Heads of Discourse. 1. From the Person Loving. 2. From the Benefits which his Love in the Exercise of it does bestow.

First, Let us consider well the Person Loving, and we cannot chuse but conclude, That it must be the greatest Happiness imaginable to be the Object of his peculiar Favour. He is the Great God, the Creator of all Things, the Fountain Good, the Owner, and Lord, and the Disposer of all things. As he is Owner and Disposer of all things, every Creature has such a Portion of Good, as he is pleased to allot it; and so we depend upon him, for to be as happy as this World can make us, since 'tis he that does unalterably assign to every one of us our measure of this World's Goods: But if we have an Interest in his peculiar Favour, who

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Our Owner and Lord of Heaven and Earth, This includes at leaſt all the Goodneſs of Heaven and Earth: If God be ours, as he is, if we are his peculiar Favourites, then all elſe is ours too. The *Apoſtle* ſpeaking to ſuch Perſons ſays, *Whether the World, or Life, or Death, or things preſent, or things to come; All are yours,* 1 Cor. 3. 22. That is, you have ſuch an Intereſt in them by your Intereſt in the Favour of God, that ye ſhall not want any of them, that is good and convenient for you.

In this is the Satisfaction of all our juſt Deſires contained, and the ſupply of all our Wants: This is Reſt to the Weary, Eyes to the Blind, Feet to the Lame, Company to the Solitary. From God all other Beings derive all their Worth and Goodneſs: He then is the Sufficiency of all, and it muſt be from his Bleſſing upon them, that they have any Goodneſs and ſuitableneſs, or Comfort in them: So that if we could have any thing elſe without his Favour, we ſhall, if he pleaſes, have but little help or comfort from it. But ſince all the Creatures, and whatever we can enjoy beſides him, have all their goodneſs from him, He muſt have in him more than all, and the Enjoyment of him, in his Love, muſt needs be more than any number of them we can get together.

It is the Love of him, who is Infinite in Power, who is an unexhauſtible Fulneſs: Who after all his Communications to Creatures, remains ſtill the ſame Infinite Source of Good. The Love of God then is richer than Ten thouſand Worlds: If we want any thing elſe, which this world cannot afford towards our Happineſs (and many ſuch Wants indeed is our wretched Nature ſubject to) He can beſtow it: We can want no good thing which he cannot give. The Love of God can ſupply the defect, and want of any thing elſe, and make us happy without it: This is Light without a Sun, Strength without Food, Health without Phyſick. *Altho the Fig-tree ſhall not Bloſſom, neither ſhall the Fruit be in the Vine; The Labour of*
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the Olive shall fail, and the Fields shall yield no meat; The Flock shall be cut from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stall; Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation, said the Prophet, in the name of those whom God regards with his peculiar Favour and Love, Hab. 3. 17, 18.

From the Love of God we cannot expect too much: This is a Blessing which exceeds, and does not fall below our Expectations; we may rest in that, for we cannot imagin any thing beyond it, that we can desire: We may find more delight in that than we can conceive; it is so full, and able to bless, that we cannot desire so much as it can afford. *God is able to do for us exceeding abundantly, beyond all that we are able to ask or think.* What bounds can be set to Infinite Attributes, and the Exercise of them, so as to say, hitherto they can go, and no farther! And what a boundless Pleasure, and Content must the Soul take, who is a Favourite of such Love! As God is Incomprehensible, his Love is Incomprehensible, and he whom it favours may say, I cannot conceive how rich I am in his Love, I am not able to conceive all the vast Felicity it contains, and gives me an Interest in.

Farther, The Love of God is also, like himself, Eternal: This is a most lasting Portion then, it is durable Riches. As long as God endures, who is Everlasting, and his Love which is Unchangeable, and the Soul of Man which is Immortal, so long may we enjoy the Felicity of his Favour, and the blisful Exercise of his Love. This is not a thing of a frail, or fading Nature: It is not one of those things which perish in the using, which make themselves wings very often, and fly away, which we cannot certainly enjoy all our Days on Earth, or which we must be certainly stript of, when we lie down in the Dust. This may certainly render us happy all our Days in this Life. *O satisfy us early with thy Mercy, so shall we rejoice, and be glad all our Days, says the Psalmist, Pal. 90.* Intimating, That if they

they had an assured Interest in the Love of God, this would be a certain ground of Satisfaction and Content for all the Days of this their mortal Life. This is true, and besides, when we go away from this World, when we must leave for ever all that we enjoy of it, This may be our portion still, and can bless us with the Goods of Eternity. And what Security and Peace is there in the Thought, that this may be an Everlasting Source of Blessings! How pure, and perfect, and high is the delight in this, while it is not allayed with the fears, or expectations of losing that which makes us so happy! Thus we may see, that the Person loving does mightily recommend the Love of God, and that we may from thence conclude the Happiness of those who are the Objects of it.

Now let us see farther, how this does also appear in the Exercises or Benefits which his matchless Love bestows. From the former head we learn what great things it can do; from this we shall see what it does, and has done: And we shall see, that as there is no Love like his, there is none so great as He, so there are no such Benefits any way to be obtained, as by his Love. These Exercises of Divine Favour are properly his lifting up of the Light of his Countenance upon us, and these are able to contribute more to our Happiness, than all things in the World besides them. The Benefits which the peculiar Favour of God bestows, are these.

1. He does forgive and pardon all their Sins to them, who are thus the Objects of his Love. They become so by the Meritorious Death and Passion of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which through their Faith is to them a Propitiation for Sin: And therefore the righteous Judge of all the World, being atton'd and reconcil'd, he will no more impute to them their Iniquity. And tho' the imperfect Creatures, do too often offend, notwithstanding all their Care, yet upon the renewal of their Repentance, and their daily asking the

the Pardon of their Sins, His Mercy for the sake of Jesus Christ, daily gives them their Pardon. Now every Man that knows himself a Sinner, and that did ever seriously consider what that imports, and what belongs to such a Condition, cannot chuse but acknowledge it an unspeakable Benefit to have his Sins all forgiven; to be sure it is really such in its self. The Man who is forgiven can think of God, and not be troubled, nor afraid; can put up his requests to the Throne of Grace with assured, and comfortable Expectations. He that knows this of himself, knows too, that the great Obstacle, and impediment of the Exercises of Divine Mercy is removed, and he may hope that the Streams of it shall plentifully flow towards him: He may hope that his Iniquities shall not withhold good things from him. And what a Pleasure is it to think of an Enemy reconciled, and become a faithful, affectionate Friend! And especially to know this of the Almighty and Eternal God! To know that infinite, and eternal Perfections, which were adverse and angry, are reconciled and become kind! How great, and how sensible a Blessing must it be for a Man to be able to say; I, that was obnoxious to an Infinite, Eternal Wrath; I that lay under the heavy load of a Just Curse, which doom'd me to everlasting Flames, am now become an Object of Infinite and Eternal Love, and an Heir of Heaven! He, who might have treated me with everlasting severity, I am sure will now use me with everlasting loving kindness. The foolish and unreasonable Ills that I have done, and the base Assaults I have offered the great God, shall cost me no more Sorrow, than that of a wholesome Repentance. This is a very happy, and very pleasant Change in a Man's Condition.

This Blessing introduces a Peace, that passes all understanding; and indeed a Peace, which the World cannot give. For I may add, that the assured Pardon of our Sins is absolutely necessary to our taking any considerable

derable Comfort, or Delight in any thing of this World; for without this, if we look into our Condition, we must know, that these are all forfeited things, that they are but lent us by the Patience of God; our tranquillity and prosperity depends upon the Will of him, who is justly displeased with us for our Sins, and is daily provoked to put an end to it. The unpardoned sinner cannot consider his Condition, nor understand it, but he must be affrighted and troubled; for he must see, that the Sword of divine Vengeance hangs continually over his Head; and this must needs dash all his Joy: But that is a very poor Felicity, which cannot endure to be reflected upon, and considered, which, if it be rightly understood, is spoilt and lost; if it be examined, is none at all. If therefore we would have a Condition in this Life, which we may reflect upon, and consider, and take delight to do so, we must have the Pardon of all our Sins assured, and God reconciled to us. And now I think, we may conclude this Head with the *Psalmist's* words, *Psal. 32. 1.* *Blessed is the Man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the Man to whom the Lord imputeth not Iniquity.*

2. Another blessed Exercise of the Divine Favour to the peculiar Objects of it is, that he does sanctify them; that he restores that most excellent Part of the Divine Image, which we unhappily lost in the Fall of our first Parents. We are taught, that this is a Fruit of his Love, *Eph. 5. 25, 26.* Where it is said, *Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word:* that is, by powring out upon them the sanctifying Operations of the Holy Spirit, who is compared to Water. Thus he expresses and exercises his Love to them that are the Objects of it; And thus his Love grows from Compassion to a Complacency; He that pitied them in their wretched Pollution, loves them into loveliness: He so shines upon them with the

the Light of his Countenance, as to communicate Light and Brightness to them, so as to adorn them with the bright Rays of his own Glory; and then he takes delight in them.

But how great the Happiness of this Effect is, let us see. This is an Exercise of Divine Love, which is exceeding fruitful, and full of Joys and Blessings; a World of new Delights: This brings a Man acquainted with that he never knew before, nor was capable of knowing, till this blessed Change was wrought in him. The Rectitude, and Order of the Soul, which this introduces, is as pleasant as Health after Sickness; There is now Ease for Pain, Strength for Weakness, Freedom for Confinement, a comfortable Enjoyment of good things, without loathing of them; Life and Activity without faintness, and weariness in well-doing; and the Pleasure of an useful Life to our selves and others instead of that which was a Burthen, and a Trouble to both. He that is sanctified has so far a well-composed Mind: He has calm Passions, regular Appetites, right and true Thoughts, good, and wise, and safe Inclinations. He can do that which is good, which his Mind tells him he ought to do, which his Conscience may applaud him for doing; That which will please God and bring him Everlasting Advantages.

He can delight in Good and Vertuous Actions; these have a great deal of a pleasing Lustre, and Beauty in them, and he has Eyes to see this now: He has a Mind capable of, and exercised in the discerning of Spiritual things. Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, Faithfulness in the exercises and expressions of them are as pleasant to the Observation of a good Man as the most lovely, and curious Colours are to a sound Eye, or the most harmonious Sounds to a well disposed Ear. And if the Vertues of a poor, imperfect Man are a delight to him; How much more must the Perfections of the Infinite God be in all the appearances, and exercises of themselves; With what delight

delight does he view the glorious Rays, and Beams of Divine Truth and Faithfulness, of Wisdom and Righteousness, of Goodness and Mercy, as they appear in God's works of Creation and Providence, and are scattered about upon this lower World! He is capable of seeing some or other of the Divine Attributes every where; and in those Dispensations, which he cannot understand, or reconcile to any other Attribute, he willingly acknowledges, and adores an Incomprehensible Wisdom.

The good Man by his spiritual and sanctified state of Mind does take a new and higher delight in the Objects of his Senses, than Beasts, or Carnal Men can do: He does not stop at meer sensual delight in them, as they do, but has moreover, and besides that, a very rational, and religious delight in them: He can please himself with admiring in them the traces and footsteps of God's glorious Perfections; In what is suitable, and pleasing to his Appetites, he admires and delights in the wisdom of God, which adapted those things, and made them so suitable, and that glorious Goodness, which affords so much Pleasure and Happiness to his Creature. He delights to praise, and love the Creator and Giver of the good things that he enjoys.

3. Another Exercise and Benefit of the Divine Love is, That he will favourably dispose of all their Affairs in this World, for them who are the peculiar Objects of his Favour. It is true, the Scripture says, *Those whom God loves, he does rebuke and chasten*: And accordingly, they especially, and above all Men, shall not escape without Affliction, when their Spiritual Condition needs it: But when God does afflict them, he does this many ways favourably. His wise, and tender Love takes care, that their Afflictions shall never be too heavy for them, that they shall not continue too long, that they shall rebound to their spiritual, and perhaps produce some temporal Advantage. The fruit

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of them shall be to take away Sin; and so they shall cure and remove a far greater Evil than themselves are; And it is an Advance towards Happiness, which is very considerable to cure a far greater Evil by a lesser one, and an Eternal Evil by a Temporal one. Their Afflictions shall bring forth the peaceable fruit of Righteousness; and so, tho' they are not joyous, but griveous in themselves, yet they shall be exceedingly joyous in their Fruits and Effects; when they form in a Man a greater Fear of God, more Meekness and Humility; when they teach him Patience and Contentedness, indifference towards this World, and desires after a better: For these and other good Effects of Affliction, upon those whom God loves, we have reason to say with the Psalmist, *Blessed is the Man whom God chasteneth, and teacheth out of his Law.*

But farther, We must consider, that God is a defence to those whom he loves, and David could say, *God is my Refuge, as well as my Portion in the Land of the Living. Thou wilt bless the Righteous,* (says he, *Psal. 5. 12.*) *and with Favour wilt thou compass him, as with a Shield.* When he sees it fittest for them, he keeps them safe from Calamities and Afflictions. So he preserved Noah from perishing in the Universal Deluge; so he rescued Lot from the Flames of Sodom; so he saved the Israelites in the Red Sea, wherein he drowned the Egyptians. And the assured Protection of the Almighty is a great comfort and satisfaction in the weak and exposed state of this present Life, where innumerable Evils always compass us about: Our own weakness and frailty, and the frailty and mutableness of all those things whereof the Prosperity of this Life does consist, render us continually liable to Vexation and Misery. In this case, and upon this account, it is absolutely necessary to us to have some good Hope of the Divine Protection, for the preserving our Minds in any measure of Tranquillity and Peace, and to deliver us from the Wrackings, and Torments of continual Fears.

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How wretched may we see many Men, even in the midst of a large Portion, through the want of this Hope? They are even undone, for fear of being undone; some almost starve themselves, out of the fear that they shall fall into want. This wretched anxiety hinders them from using what they have, and makes them want for fear of wanting it. Hence are those Cares that devour the Thoughts of many Men, that tire, and spend their Bodies, that disturb their Minds, that confound their Reason, that interrupt and break their Sleep, and spoil the Enjoyment even of the best things they have: So unhappy are they while sensible of the mutableness of their Condition, and while they want an assured Trust, and Reliance upon the Providence of God. But he whom God loves, can rely upon him, he can expect safety from his ever-waking, and irresistible Providence; and so is freed from the Torment of these anxious Cares and Fears. The happy Author of this Psalm, where our Text is, expresses something of the Tranquillity and Peace of his Mind, which was the Effect of God's *lifting up the light of his Countenance upon him.* *I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety,* Verse 8.

And as the Man whom God loves, has these comfortable Expectations relating to the Evils which this Life is exposed to; so he may have as comfortable ones relating to the good things, that may be enjoyed here. These are all of them the promised Portion of those whom God loves; as the Apostle shews us in saying, *That Godliness hath the Promise of the Life that now is, as well as of that to come.* And when 'tis said, *Psal. 84. 11. God will not withhold any good thing from them that walk uprightly.* This is meant of such *They whom he loves, shall be sure to want no manner of thing that is good for them.*

Now, how great Content and Satisfaction may a Man conceive from this Exercise of Divine Love, from

God's continual Care of him, and his Affairs! Surely this is the greatest Felicity in this World, to have all our Affairs regarded by the Wise, and Almighty God, the Disposer of all things. To be, and know ourselves always under the Eye and Care of such a Friend. To have all our Interests regarded, as if they were his own: To have him take upon himself the care of doing us good, and making us happy, of making every thing that befalls us, to redound to our Advantage. Indeed, this assurance must needs sweeten every Evil that befalls us, of what sort soever it is; to think, This is ordered for me by him that loves me, by him that is as tender of my Well-fare, as I myself could be; by him that is infinitely wiser than I, and knows what is best for me. How easie, and calm a condition may that Man's mind be in, at all times, who has this assurance. Farther, We must reckon that this consideration exceedingly heightens the sweetness of every good we enjoy. To consider this is the favour of Heaven to me; I receive this Enjoyment from the peculiar Love of God. The Enjoyment of that which is the Fruit of Man's own Pains and Labour, adds much to the Pleasure of the Enjoyment: But the Favour of God, and his Blessing contributes much more: When I can say, This that I now have, proceeds from that special Favour of Heaven, which takes care of me.

4. Lastly, The peculiar Favour of God gives to those whom he so loves, an assured, and safe Right and Title to the Everlasting Blessedness, which is to come. They are they certain Heirs of Heaven. The Love of the Father is promised to them that believe in Christ: And this Love has promised to give them Eternal Life. His Love will never cease blessing them, till it has made them perfectly Blessed. Till it has cured all their Imperfections, has supplied all their Wants, has removed from them all Evil, and set them safe in perfect Bliss. This is the Condition of the Future Blessedness, which they are designed for.

No desirable Thing shall be wanting there, neither shall any evil encumber it. And this shall be the rich, and Bounteous, and Everlasting Portion of those whom God loves: They may expect, that the good Work of Sanctification, which is begun in them, shall be perfected unto the Day of Jesus Christ: *That the Lord Jesus will keep them from every evil work, and preserve them to his Heavenly Kingdom.* And how comfortably must a Man spend his Days under this joyful Expectation! Every thing here may mind him of his Home, the Happy *Canaan* above: The good things here may tell him of better there; and when any of these please, he can say, How much more pleasant are the things which are there! The Griefs of Earth may put him in mind of the Joys of Heaven; and when any thing troubles him here, he can consider there is no such trouble there. The Mutation of Earthly things, may call to his Mind the Stability and Durableness of the Heavenly; and this may comfort him when the other vexes him. How pleasantly does he spend his Days, that is all his Life long travelling towards Heaven! It does not trouble him to perceive Time waste, and spend its self apace: His Heart, and Affections are removed to Heaven already, and he is glad that Time makes haste to remove his Person thither too: He is glad to think that it is continually doing so. He knows that whenever Time shall commit him to Eternity, he shall go from lower degrees of Happiness to higher; from that which suffers some Interruptions here, at least as to the Sense and Enjoyment of it, to that which shall never know any Interruptions. The Light of God's Countenance may have some Intervals of Darkness now mingled with it; but then shall shine bright upon him for ever, and make a continual happy Day of Glory. He goes from a mixed Happiness to a pure and perfect one: He does not go out of the World; but well provided for in another.

ther, since God will there be his everlasting Portion, and exceeding great Reward.

Now I have done the Proof of this Truth, That the Favour of God, is the most desirable Good, and the Enjoyment of that, the best Spirit and Fountain of our Happiness and Comfort. I have dwelt long upon this (as I said the Discourse would chiefly be employed in it) and may, I think, be excused for staying long among so many pleasant Thoughts, as the Love of God suggests.

Application. I shall say but little now for Application of these things, because I intend the following Discourse to be applicatory of this. For the present, let us reflect a little upon what has been said.

And do not these things which have been said of the Love of God, naturally lead us to condemn, both in our selves and others, all the neglect there is among us, of so matchless a Benefit? Is it not a wonderful thing, that Mankind should neglect the Love of God? That it should be common, and general among Men to have little or no Concern or an Interest in that? And yet it is thus with the World. The Psalmist here does not say, *There be many that say, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon us:* Alas! the Many follow other Goods, and neglect this; They spend their Labour for that which is not Bread, and their Money for that which will not profit, and neglect the true Felicity. There is nothing so little minded in the World, as the securing an Interest in the Love of God. There are many guilty of this, that do not observe it in themselves. Let us see then, who must be charged with this Folly; that so we may discover what there is of it in our selves.

Some look upon the Love of God, as a thing that will come of its self, without any seeking, or endeavours after it; and it is a very cheap thing in their Opinion of it: They have such an Opinion of the Goodness of God, that they think he cannot be affronted,

ted, or displeased, but will love them, however they carry themselves towards him: They think he will love them, tho' they do not much care for his Love, tho' they never seek, tho' they continually forfeit and despise it: They think indeed that he will cast Pearls before Swine.

Many really do not value the Love of God, they do not consider the Necessity and Worth of it. They have God himself very little in their Thoughts, and so they do not know, or they consider not the Importance of an Interest in his Love. They do not consider that an Over-ruling Providence mingles its self with all things: That they have all they enjoy from him: That they must be beholden to him for an Happy Life on Earth; and they banish utterly from their Thoughts all concern and care about the Life to come.

Is not any thing perferr'd by a great many before this that comes in competition with it? Do they not value a little unprofitable Gain, a little foolish Pleasure, a little slippery Honour, and the most transient Gratifications of their desires of any sort, more than the Love of an Infinite, Eternal God? Do not Men commonly expect their Happiness from the things of this World; from what they can see, or taste, or feel? Are not sensible things most sensible to the dull, and carnal Minds of Men? How little Charm, or Invitation has this thin, invisible Blessing with it to a great many! They forget that the things which are not seen, are Eternal; That Spiritual things are the greatest, and the most considerable. Spiritual things are as nothing to them; they have not the Senses of their Minds exercised to discern such things.

And farther: Are there not many, that never had a serious, enquiring Thought, whether they are in Favour with God or not; Whether the Almighty be to them a Friend, or an Enemy; That never did set themselves down, seriously to examine into this Matter, or that would continue the enquiry till they came to a

well-grounded Determination concerning their State? And do such indeed desire an Interest in the Love of God?

Are there not also many that take no care to please God, who follow their own Inclinations, without any regard to his Will and Laws, and so do daily affront, and displease him? And are these concern'd for an Interest in his favour? These that live in gainful, or pleasant Sins, and will not be persuaded to leave them for the Favour of God; Or, they that live in the habitual, constant Practice of the most needless Sins, such as Swearing, Cursing, Backbiting, Slandering; or in the most mischievous, and hurtful Sins, such as Intemperance and Prodigality, and will not leave them for the Favour of God; Are they concern'd for an Interest in that?

How many besides are there, that put off this Concern and Care, and bid it stand by till they have accomplished some other Designs? Do they not think, that they may accomplish Designs, which will be of Advantage to them without the Favour and Blessing of God upon them; Do they not think those Designs more necessary, and advantageous to them than that? And is not this to slight, and undervalue that? To account it but a needless, or an indifferent thing? Thus it is but too evident, that a great many neglect this Blessedness.

And by these things we may understand our selves, if we will compare them with our own Carriage, and may see whether we have been in this Folly or not: And indeed it may hereby appear, that the best of us may charge our selves with having been too deep in it; that we have followed the things which are seen too much, and the unseen things too little: We have loved, and sought the Creature more than the Creator. But we must not observe this without making our selves sensible of the Guilt, and Folly of it, and Resolutions to be careful for the future, that we may avoid it. Let this then be the Matter of our Shame and Sorrow. Let us consider how we must needs have offended
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God herein; That we have been guilty of the Idolatry of the Heart in loving, and seeking more the things of this World, than the enjoyment of God; that we have been herein very ungrateful to his Creating Goodness, in despising and neglecting that Happiness which he made us capable to enjoy; that we have despised the Blood, and Death of the Redeemer, whereby an Attainment has been made for our Sins, and Salvation purchased for us at a costly rate, even the Salvation which herein we have neglected. Let us own then, that we have greatly sinned, so far as we have been guilty in this Matter, and have deserved the most terrible Punishment: We have deserved that God should put us off with any thing rather than his Love, while we have been seeking any thing more than that: We deserve to feel the everlasting Terrors of his Anger, If we despise his Love; and may reckon it an amazing Instance of his Mercy and Patience, that we are yet spared, and have time to recollect, and amend our selves. Let us confess our Sin, and resolve to amend it. Let us, by frequent consideration of the necessity, the usefulness, the Happiness of God's Favour, bring our selves to have a mighty esteem and value for it, and raise in our selves the most earnest desires, and longings after it. Let us readily put far away from us all things that will forfeit, and lose the Favour of God. Let us be diligent and industrious in our Duty, in doing the things that will please him: And then, let us *ask for this, and we shall receive it; Let us seek, and we shall find; let us knock, and this full Treasury of Blessings, shall be opened to us.*

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INfinite, and Almighty Lord our God: Thou art he who hast made the Heavens and the Earth, and the Sea, and all that is in them; Thou art the Fountain Good, and the sufficiency of every Creature in Heaven and Earth. We acknowledge, O Lord, it is in Thee that we live, move, and have our Being, and all our fresh Springs are in Thee. Thou art an Infinite Good, and after all thy Communications to thy Creatures dost remain the same: In Thee still, does all Fulness dwell. To Thee, O Lord, do we poor and miserable Creatures make our humble Addresses: Thou alone hast the words of Eternal Life; Thou only canst make us happy; In thy Favour is Life, even Eternal Life; and thy loving kindness extends beyond the bounds of our present mortal Life. Oh Lord, lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon us, and bless, and be merciful unto us: Enlighten our darkness, strengthen our weakness, sanctify our unholy and polluted Natures; communicate of thy fulness to the supply of all our wants, that we may rejoice in thy Goodness, and always live to Thy Glory. Lord, we humble and abase our selves before Thee, for that we have heretofore so little valued thy Favour, or concerned our selves to enjoy it: We foolish Creatures have been ready to prefer any thing before it; we have valued the gratifying of impertinent and unreasonable desires, the getting a little worldly Gain, the enjoying a little sensual Pleasure, above the matchless Blessings of thy Love. We have not believed thy Goodness, nor been able to trust thy Favour and Love, to take care of, and provide for us. Thus are we exceeding guilty, and while we remain thus estranged from Thee, we can never be happy. We beseech Thee, O Lord, deal not with us after our Sins, neither reward us according to our Iniquities: When we humbly confess our Sins, do thou graciously forgive them, and cleanse us from all our unrighteousness. Make us for the future to value thy Love above
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all things; and therefore to let our selves with great care to do those things that are well-pleasing in thy sight, and to avoid whatever is offensive to the pure Eyes of thy Glory. Let us be sensible that it is only the pure in Heart that can see Thee, and therefore be industrious to cleanse our selves from all filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in thy Fear. Lord, we give thanks for thy Forbearance and Patience towards us, that thou hast not yet cut us off, and sent us to Eternal misery; that we have yet Means of Grace, and Hopes of Glory: Let thy Goodness, and Forbearance lead us effectually to unfeigned Repentance, and end in a full Remission of all our Sins. Transform us into thy likeness by the renewing of our Minds, and let the light of thy Countenance beautify and adorn us: Love us into loveliness, O thou Almighty Love, that thou mayst then delight in us, and we as we ought, may have our chief delight in Thee.

We pray Thee, shew Mercy to all Mankind: Pour out thy Spirit upon all Flesh, that they may know Thee, and seek Thee, and find and praise Thee, and rejoyce in Thy abundant Goodness. Let thy continual Pity cleanse, and defend thy Church. Lord, look down in mercy upon us, and bless us, that all the ends of the World may fear Thee. We pray Thee do good to these Nations in which we live, according to thy Infinite Sufficiency, and our Necessities: Oh let not our Iniquities withhold good things from us, but according to the multitude of thy tender Compassions, blot out all our Transgressions: Bless our Gracious Queen; and make her a Nursing Mother to that part of thy Church, which thou hast planted among us: Bless abundantly the Royal Family, and make them the Honourable Instruments of maintaining Peace and Truth, not only in these, but also in the Neighbouring Nations, to the Glory of thy Great Name. Bless all Ranks and Degrees of Men among us, and make them to live to thy Glory, to be conformable and obedient to our Governours, and useful, peaceable, righteous, and charitable one towards another in their several Stations. We humbly pray for all Friends, Relations, Benefactors; bless, and preserve them from every evil Work, and conduct them to thy Heavenly Kingdom.

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Let this Day, Oh Lord, be happy to us in the fruitful, and effectual Influences of thy Ordinances upon our Hearts and Lives: Let us not be forgetful Hearers, but be doers of thy Word, that we may be blest in our Deeds. Grant us to lie down in Peace this Night, to rest in Safety: And be thou, O God, our Portion and Refuge in the Land of the Living, and hereafter our exceeding great Reward, for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whose Name and Words, we farther present our Requests unto Thee, saying,

OUR Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil, Amen.

T H E

THE HEAVENLY MIND,

Described and Urged.

Let us Pray:

PREVENT us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Colos. 3. 2.

Set your Affections on Things above, and not on things on the Earth.

HOW well did the Bounteous Creator of all things contrive the nature of Man, for the making him exceedingly Happy! He put into our Constitution an Immortal Spirit, join'd to a Living and Sensible Body: And so he made us capable of the Delights of both Worlds, the Spiritual, and the Material. By our Souls we are capable to enjoy, and delight in Spiritual Objects, and their Properties and Qualities: We are capable of a rational, spiritual Delight in sensible Objects, and we are capable to enjoy, and delight in God himself, and his Infinite, Eternal Perfections. And by our Bodies, which are allied

allied to this World, we are capable of a sensual Delight in the things of it; to enjoy and please our selves with the Properties, Vertues and Qualities belonging to Material things. So bounteous and kind was the Creator to Man, in the Forming of him.

But alas! Man has not been kind to himself: He did not remain long in the happy State which he was at first set in; but by following too much the Pleasures of his sense, he lost all the greatest Pleasures of his Mind. By eating the Forbidden Fruit, he sinned against God; lost his Favour, and the Enjoyment of him; became alienated from God; and his Mind became subject to the shameful Disease of Sensuality. A low, and sordid Propensity to Earthly things, did from henceforth possess him, and a wretched Ignorance of, and Adverseness towards Heavenly and Spiritual things, which are the best things he can enjoy. We are condemned to enjoy only the lowest and weakest, and the least part of our Happiness; to gnaw, as it were, on the Shell of pleasure, and enjoy no more than the Brute Beasts do. We following the unhappy Fall of our Nature, do amuse, and entertain our selves only with the poor Objects of sense, utterly forget, and neglect our higher Capacities, and our true Happiness. It is the whole Business of our Religion in all the parts of it, to recover us from this shameful, and deadly Fall; to draw us off from this our wretched Attachment to this World; and turn us from a false Happiness to a true one. The scope and aim of all its Doctrines, Precepts, Promises, Threatnings, Morives and Assistances is this, to make us truly happy. And the Sum of all is, to bring us to what the Apostle here exhorts to, in saying, *Set your Affections on Things above, not on Things on the Earth.* By *Things above*, he means those very things which were recommended to you, by the Discourse immediately foregoing this, as the chiefest, and the true Objects of our Happiness:—He means God himself,

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who is our Chief Good, and the Expressions, and Exercises of his peculiar Favour and Love. He means the Graces which the Holy Spirit works into the Souls of Men, which perfect, and adorn, and compose the Mind: He means the Everlasting Blessedness which is to come, the Happiness and Joys of Heaven.

By advising to *set our Affections* on those things, he means they should be much the Objects of our Minds; he intends the Application of the whole Soul to them, and the employing of all our Powers about them. The Original word, which we render here *set your Affections* has this large Import, and Signification, and might be rendered, *Mind those things which are above*: Let your Judgments esteem them, your Wills chuse, and your Affections follow them.

And not on Things on the Earth: that is, rather than the Things of the Earth. It is according to the Custom and Phrase of the *Hebrew Language*, to express thus, when it only intends to prefer the former things it speaks of, before the latter. So in *Hos. 6. 6.* the Prophet, in the Person of God, says, *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*: That is, rather than Sacrifice, he intended to express God's preference of Mercy before Sacrifice. Here then the *Apostle*, who was an *Hebrew of Hebrews*, speaking after the Phrase and Manner of his own Language, must be understood to mean, *Set your Affections on Things above, rather than on Things on the Earth*: Mind those Things most; let them have the preference with you. He does not forbid, nor does our Religion forbid the moderate seeking, and enjoyment of the Good things of this World. We are not bound to be unsensible of their Goodness, to take no delight in them, nor absolutely, and wholly to refuse, or reject all sensual Pleasures. The things of this World are good in their Kind and Degree, and are useful and necessary to us in our present state, and we may enjoy them with delight, and give God Thanks for them. But still we must prefer

prefer the *things above*, to those *below*; Spiritual Things to Material; the better, and nobler things to those that are worse, and of a meaner Nature.

It shall be the Business of this Discourse (by God's Assistance) to explain or express to you more largely and particularly, the Import and Meaning of the *Apostle's* exhortation here: And then to urge our Obedience to it, with a few proper Motives: And thus will this Discourse (as it was intended) be very Applicatory of that which goes before it.

In the first place, I shall shew you how we ought to mind and apply our selves to the *things above*: With how much Concern and Care we should seek the Favour of God, the matchless Blessings of his Love, and the enjoyment of him therein. This I shall represent to you under these three Heads.

1. The *Things above* must have the Preference of our Judgments: We must esteem, and value them before all other.

2. They must have the Preference of our Wills and Affections; We must chuse, and love them, desire and delight in them, more than in any other.

3. They must have the Preference of our Actions, and Course of Life. We should seek, and pursue them more than all other things.

I shall particularly insist and enlarge my Discourse upon each of these severally, for the better Illustration of them.

1. Those things ought to have the preference of our Judgments: We should esteem and value them as the best things. We must account God our Chiefest Good, and the enjoyment of him in his Love, the highest Felicity: This should be the settled, and fixed Judgment of our Souls; a Conclusion deliberately, and firmly made. The *Apostle* who gives this direction in our present Text, expresses thus concerning himself, when he says, *Phil. 3, 8. I count all things but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him; that is, That*
I may

I may through him have an Interest in God, and in the Blessings of his peculiar Love. This has been the constant Practice and State of all good and rectified Souls. *Thy loving Kindness is better than life*, says David, *Psal. 63. 3. More to be desired are thy Commandments than Gold, yea, than much fine Gold, sweeter also than the Honey, and the Honey-comb, Psal. 19.* This preference and esteem of things above, is several times exprest by Solomon, in the words which he puts into the Mouth of a Holy Soul, in his Book of Canticles, in Chap. 1. Verse. 2. She says to Christ, *Thy Love is better than Wine.* The expressions and exercises of thy Favour are better far, and more cheering and refreshing to the Mind, than the richest Wines are to the faint and thirsty Body. Again, she says, Chap. 2. 3. *As the Apple Tree among the Trees of the Wood, so is my Beloved among the Sons.* He is to be preferred before all other. Yea, she says in plain Terms, Chap. 5. 10. *He is the chiefest among Ten thousand.* These are all of them the expressions of such Souls, as mind the things above rather than those below, and prefer Spiritual Objects before Sensual. God must have the Ascendent in our Souls. He who truly is the Chiefest Good, must be accounted so. We must believe him the Center and source of all Goodness; the Fountain and Giver of all that which is in the Creatures. And that he has not given away from himself what he has communicated to them, but is still in inexhaustible Fulness of Good: That in him does all desirable Fulness dwell; and that he alone is able to afford full Content and Happiness to the Soul of Man. We must account it a much happier State to enjoy the things above, than the things below: Much better to be vertuous and good, than rich and great, to enjoy the Favour of God, than the Esteem of Men. And if we have the greatest value and esteem for the things above, we shall value all other things according to the relation which they bear to them.

Those things which have a subserviency to them, and are means of attaining them, will be valued next to them, and will for their sakes be in great esteem too. Such are Prayer, Hearing the Word of God, Reading and Meditating on it, and the Attendance upon Sacraments. And again: Those things which are contrary and opposite to these, which hinder the enjoyment of them, will not be lookt upon as Indifferent, they will be accounted very evil things, and be absolutely rejected from all esteem with us; such are all manner of Sins and Wickednesses. Thus must the things above have the Preference of our Judgments.

2. They must also have the preference of our Wills and Affections. We must chuse them before all other things; love, desire, and delight most in them. When those things are proposed, described, and offered to us, we must not regard them with indifferent, and careless Minds. Our Souls must be moved towards them, in chusing, accepting, and desiring above all things to be Partakers of them. This also has been the Temper of good Souls, as the Expressions that have fallen from such do abundantly declare. The Holy Author of *Psal. 73.* says to God, *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is none on Earth that I can desire besides Thee.* The Spouse in the *Canticles* says, *Cant. 1. 2. Let him kiss me with the Kisses of his Mouth.* That which I chiefly desire is, to receive the expressions of thy matchless Love. And in *Verse 4.* she says, *We will be glad, and rejoyce in Thee, we will remember Thy Love more than Wine.* If we can enjoy thy Favour, Oh Jesus! Lover of Souls, This is that we most value; This is all we care for, This is that will be most pleasing to us. Ardent Desires after God, the Psalmist expresses; *Psal. 42. 1, 2. As the Hart panteth after the Water-Brooks, so panteth my Soul after Thee, O God. My Soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God!*

If we are not assured of an interest in the peculiar Love of God, we should most earnestly and incessantly desire this: We should make it the chief subject and matter of our Prayers. The want of this should not be satisfied, and made up with any thing else. God must be the only Center of our Desires and Hopes: We should Love him with a transcendent Love. Nothing should grieve, or trouble us so much, as what does damp our Hopes of Heaven; nothing so much transport and please, as what does raise, and promote, and confirm them.

If we have been so happy as to gain an Interest in his Favour, and to be in some measure Partakers of the Blessings of his Love, it will be the Temper of our Minds to delight greatly in the *things above*; highly will the Thoughts of our Happiness please us; we shall be able to say of God as David did, *My Meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad, or rejoice in the Lord*, Psal. 164. This will be the chief delight and solace of the Heavenly Soul, to think God *loves me*, the most High has a peculiar favour for me; *This God is my God for ever and ever*: With highest pleasure will the Soul say, *My Beloved is mine, and I am his: There is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness*.

And if such be the most welcome and pleasant Thoughts, it cannot be but they will be very frequent ones. *Oh how I love thy Law!* (says David) *it is my Meditation all the Day*, Psal. 119. 97.

When we can let many Days pass over our Heads, without one serious and sensible Thought of Heavenly things, this is a Symptom of an Earthly, and Carnal Mind. The Heavenly Mind is necessitated, and drawn to other Thoughts, but it inclines to these.

And the Sabbaths, and publick Worship of God are a great delight to such a Man: When he may be separated from the Concerns of the World, to contemplate the Riches of God's Love, to taste the Sweetness of it, to consider the Beauty of Holiness, and the Joys

of Heaven. The sense of his Soul is the same with that which David expresses, *Psal. 84. 10. A Day in thy Courts it better than a Thousand; I had rather be a Door-keeper in the House of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* And Solomon puts a mighty value and esteem for the Worship and Sacred Ordinances of God, and an excessive delight in them into the Character of a devout Soul, which he gives us in his sublime Song, *Cant. 2. 3, 4, 5.* where after he had made her say, *As the Apple-Tree among the Trees of the Wood, so is my Beloved among the Sons:* She carries on the Metaphor, and says, *I sat down under his Shadow with great delight, and his Fruit was sweet unto my taste. He brought me into the Banqueting-house, and his Banner over me was Love.* And being thus entertained with his Love, she is transported with delight, she is, as it were, over-whelmed with Joy: *Stay me with Apples, (says she) Comfort me with Flag-gons, for I am sick of love.* Which is as much as to say, thy Love, dear Lord, is great, like thy Self, and far greater than my narrow Capacity! When I consider, when I feel it, when I enjoy the exercises of it in Holy Communion with Thee, I am, methinks, my self, all Love; I am transported in Ecstasies of Love; and the love I feel in my self, and the delight I take in thine, are a pleasure even too great for me, without thy assistance, to bear it. If our Mind and Heart were truly set on *things above*; we should go from Publick Devotion to Private, either in our Closets or Families: Certainly, he that loves those things, and wishes to be employed to Eternity about them, cannot think One whole Day in seven too much to be separated entirely from the World, for the enjoyment of them.

And the Heavenly Soul will be often *discoursing* of Heavenly things. It is a Pleasure to speak of that we extremely love. The Holy Soul represented in the *Canticles*, does so often extol her Beloved, and so stay and dwell upon the Descriptions, Commendations and

Discourses

Discourses concerning Christ, as does sufficiently shew, *He is indeed her Beloved.* The Society therefore wherein such an one may best discourse of his Heart's chief Joy, will be always most acceptable, and desirable to him. Those that value highly the same things that we value and love, will be most agreeable to us, especially in such cases where there can be no rivalling of each other, as it is in this. Heavenly Souls will be most acceptable to the Heavenly. And the Joy and Pleasure which attends the Thoughts and Remembrance of those heavenly Things, which they are partly possess, and partly in expectation of, will be able in a little time at least, to overcome every worldly Sorrow.

Lastly; If we value and love Heaven, and *things above, more than things on the Earth,* we must greatly desire to be in Heaven. We must needs desire to be advanced to that state where we shall more perfectly enjoy those things than we can here; where we shall be satisfied with the communicated likeness of God in our perfect and compleat Sanctification, where we shall enjoy perfect Rest and Blessedness; we cannot chuse but desire that State, where, as we shall have fuller enjoyment of the things we mostly love, so the enjoyment of them shall be more constant and uninterrupted; where we shall have the light of God's Countenance always shining bright upon us; where no Clouds, no Eclipses shall hide, or any Night ever take from us, but it shall make a continual joyful and glorious Day. The Soul then that does truly relish and delight in these Divine things; will, with submission to the Will of God, long for the time of his removal to that better State. He will not think his Life on Earth too short, but rather too long: And be ready to say, When will this my tedious Pilgrimage be over? *When shall I come and appear before God!* He is not only contented, but even desirous with St. Paul, *to depart, and to be with Christ.* He can willingly forsake, not

only a poor, mean, and laborious state on Earth; but even a rich, prosperous, and easie one, for the better enjoyments of Heaven: For that which he enjoys of Heaven here, is that which he chiefly delights in. And since the second Coming of Christ is that which brings him his full Redemption, and the perfect Fruition of God and his Love, he will greatly long for that; he will be one of those that *love his Appearing*. He has the Spirit of the Bride in him, who says, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly*, in *Rev. 22*. Or as the holy Souls before his first Coming, in longing desire after that, *Cant. 8. 14*. He will say for his second, *Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou like to a Roe, or to a young Hart upon the Mountains of Spices*. Thus must our Will and Affections prefer the *Things above*.

3. Those things must have also the Preference of our Actions, and Course of Life. And it is a certain consequent and fruit of the other two particulars, and the best Indication of them in us, that we chiefly endeavour after, and mostly seek and pursue the *Things above*.

It is necessarily included in the minding those *Things*, that we seek them, and endeavour to be Partakers of them. We must *strive to enter in at the straight gate*; we must *give diligence, to make our Calling and Election sure*; we must *work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. Strong and true desires after any other things, will excite suitable Endeavours; therefore it must be so with us in this Case. And thus it was with the good Soul, whose Affections towards God, *Solomon* describes; who is represented by him, as very inquisitive after him, She lov'd in his absence; as restless in her enquiry and search, till she *had found him whom her Soul loved*, *Cant. 3. 1, 2, 3, 4*. Lazy wishes are of no value: Till we come to active Desires and very vigorous Endeavours, we have not our Heart set upon the *Things above*. We must very diligently use the Means that God has appointed, and

does afford us for the making us Partakers of those things: The ordinary Means of attaining the Sanctification of our Nature; the assured Pardon of our Sins; the Beams of Divine Favour, and a Title to Everlasting Glory: And they are, Private and Publick Prayers, the Preaching of God's Word, and his Sacraments. These must be valued as Means, as I said before, and also I say now, they must be very diligently attended upon, and used. It must not be an indifferent Matter with us, whether we enjoy them or not.

If we rightly, and heartily desire heavenly Things, we shall be very diligent and industrious in that Course of Duty, which the Providence of God gives us; whatever Station we are in, we shall endeavour to adorn it, to glorify God by our Behaviour in it; We shall be *steadfast, and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*; and ought to be so, *as knowing, That our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*: As believing, that the glorious and eternal Rewards of Heaven deserve our greatest diligence and labour in our Duty.

And farther; if we rightly mind the *things above*, we shall set our selves, as much as we need, to remove the Hindrances of attaining them. We shall, and ought to be ready to *cut off a right Hand, and pluck out a right Eye, that offends*, and that would hinder our entrance into Life. We must not entertain, or cherish any Sin; but must industriously mortify, weaken, and subdue all carnal and corrupt Affections. We must endeavour the weaning our selves, as much as may be from the World, and to be as indifferent about our outward Condition in it as we can be. We must shake off all such Clogs and Weights, that our freed Souls may without Incumbrance, aspire towards Heaven.

And we must *chiefly* seek and pursue the *Things above*, seek them with more diligence and endeavour, with more earnest Application of Mind than we do *the things below*. This our Saviour expressly directs,

Mat. 6. 33. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and this he seems to intimate we should do, when he says, *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled.* It must be the chief end and care of Life to gain the things above: And as the Heavenly things are to be the End, so they are to be the Rule and Guide of our Actions. We must value all other things according to their subserviency to those, as has been said; and then the things of this World are to be sought, only in such circumstances, or such kinds of them, as they may have some subserviency to these: For instance, A Man should chuse that Employment and State in the World, in which he may best preserve his Innocence, and keep a good Conscience, and have frequent and chearful Communion with God, rather than that which is more dangerous, but is likely to have more of worldly Profit, or sensual Pleasure attending it. A Man should rather chuse a Life of Labour and Employment, wherein he may be serviceable to God, and to the present, or everlasting Well-fare of Mankind; than to live in an useless Ease and Idleness. Again, the *Things above* must always be followed before these, whenever there is any Competition between them. We must, when 'tis necessary, forsake these for them. If we might enjoy the greatest Pleasures of this World, or the most valued Advantages of it, those which would give us the greatest Interest and Respect among Men, but for the gaining of these, we must do those things, that would forfeit and lose the Favour of God; those things which he forbids: We must then forsake and abandon all those things for the sake of this, and resolve never to enjoy even the greatest Advantages of this World, if we cannot have them with the Favour and Blessing of God. Thus should we in the course of our Life and Actions, prefer the *Things above*, before those below.

Thus I have shewn you what it is which the *Apostle* exhorts to here, in the full Latitude and Extent of it.

All this he intends we should do in minding the *Things above*. It remains now, that I urge your Obedience to this Advice by such Arguments and Motives as may justly prevail upon you.

I. And in the first place let this be one, That unless we thus mind the *Things above*, we shall never obtain them. We are not to look upon our Text as only an Advice or Counsel, but must receive it as a Law and Precept: It is thus we ought to mind those things: And it is the plain Import of divers other places of Scripture, that God requires this of us. This is meant, when our Saviour says, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind*, Mat. 22. 37. And when he says, *If any Man come unto me, and hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Sisters, yea and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple*, Luke 14. 26. That is, in comparison to me, he must hate and despise them. He must love and value me more than he does them, or he is not worthy of an Interest in the Favours and Blessings which I have purchased. And there is another Scripture very expresse to this purpose, but which has been wrested by bad Translation to a very different one, which I shall therefore here endeavour to recover to its right use: It is *John 21. 15. Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, Son of Jonas, Lovest thou me more than these?* The original words would bear the rendering of them thus, *Lovest thou me more than these things?* That is, more than thy Trade, and worldly Business, and Gains? The generality of the Church of Rome chuse to render them thus, *Lovest thou me more than these do?* As if our Lord would seem to expect in Peter a greater Love to him, than was in the rest of the *Apostles*; and this must be the Foundation for Peter's Primacy among the *Apostles*, and for the Pope of Rome his Supremacy in the Church. But if we well consider the Context, we shall find this a very weak

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Foundation; we shall see no reason to think that the Question intimates our Lord's present, or intended Preference of *Peter* to the rest of the *Apostles*; but rather that it intimates an Admonition of *Peter* to prefer our Lord, and his Interest and Service before the Things of the World. When our Lord was dead, and his Disciples were now come to *Galilee*, according to his Appointment to meet him there; while they staid there, *Peter* returned to his Trade of Fishing, and drew the rest of the Disciples who had been of that Employment to joyn with him. After they had had a Night of fruitless Labour, Jesus in the Morning presents himself to them; and as they were eating in his presence, he propounds this Question to *Peter*, in Verse 15. Now he had reason to single out *Peter*, to this Examination, because it was he that had made the motion of this return to their worldly Business, and had drawn the others to it after he had separated them to be *Fishers of Men*. And since this was plainly the occasion of the Question, we may most reasonably interpret it to intimate a Rebuke of that *Apostle* for this return to his Trade; and what our Lord replies to *Peter's* Answer to his Question, does sufficiently justify, and even require this Interpretation of it; for he says to him three times, *Feed my Lambs*; or *my Sheep*, which was as much as to say to him, Shew thy Love to me, if thou hast it, by betaking thy self intirely, and industriously to the Office of an *Apostle*, and leave this worldly Trade and Business, from which I have called Thee. This then is without doubt the meaning of this Place. The Question of our Lord intimates, that he required of St. *Peter*, that he should love him more than worldly Gains, more than his Trade, and the Business that he had called him from, and should accordingly apply himself to that Service of him, which he had called him to.

|| This then is a standing Law and Rule, and Universally obliging, That we love God more than the Things

Things of the World. And if so, it is, we may be sure, a necessary condition to be performed for our partaking of the *Things above*. If God requires us to prefer them, we cannot but without ground expect, that he will ever bestow them upon us unless we do so. He has not made this Law only to dispense with it, but to guide us to our Happiness thereby if we will obey it, or to condemn us to misery if we will not.

2. To encourage our selves thus to prefer the *Things above*, we may consider that if we do so, we shall certainly obtain them. We shall not set our Hearts upon them in vain, *God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him*, Heb. 11. 6. *To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for Glory, Honour and Immortality, God will give Eternal Life*, the *Apostle* assures us, Rom 2. 7. In this course we shall be sure not to run in vain, nor to labour in vain. It pleases God that we despise the present Allurements, and good things of this World, in comparison to the matchless Blessings of his Love. Therefore *Moses* is commended for having done so, when he *esteemed the reproach of Christ greater Riches than the Treasures of Egypt; and chose rather to suffer affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin, which are but for a Season*, Heb. 11. 25, 26. This renders any that do it, the peculiar Favourites of Heaven, as is plainly intimated, Heb. 11. 16. where 'tis said of some, *They desired a better Countrey, even in heaven; therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God*. He thought fit, he was pleased to own a peculiar Relation to such Persons; he was willing to be called their God; that is, to be their God; and it is added in the same Verse, *He hath prepared for them a City*: Since Heaven was that they chiefly desired, he intended them for Heaven.

3. Lastly, It may be another encouragement to what the *Apostle* here requires, That if we do thus prefer the *Things above*, God will provide and bestow
a com-

a competent Portion of the Things of this World. If we value and seek most the Things of this World, we may through God's displeasure miss of them: For his over-ruling Providence disposes of all things, and he can frustrate all our Designs, if we displease him; and make us low, and poor, and mean, notwithstanding all our Endeavours to be otherwise; and displease him we certainly do, if we do not esteem and seek him and his Love before all other things. But, if we do this, we shall become, as was said before, the peculiar Favourites of his Love: And if for this he will be our God, it may be certainly concluded, that we shall not want any of his Creatures: If he will give the greater, he will not withhold the less; he will not let such Persons want any manner of thing that is good for them. And this indeed is what our Saviour has expressly promised, *Mat. 6. 33. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.* By these things he means those he had been speaking of before, not the superfluous Riches of this World, not the great Dignities and Honours of it, which things are but an useless Burthen, and not at all necessary to our Happiness; but Meat, and Drink, and Cloathing, and the necessary Accommodations of this present Life; These things the Care of Providence will certainly provide for us, if we love God with all our Heart, and live according to a high esteem and value for his Favour and Love. And thus we may see, that to mind and prefer the *Things above*, is the surest and the shortest way to Happiness, both in this Life and the next; and more than this, I hope need not be said to move us to it.

THE
PRAYER.

O Most blessed and glorious God, the only perfect, and all-sufficient Being! Thou art, O Lord, thine own Infinite and Eternal Happiness, and thou givest Being and Happiness to all thy Creatures; thy Infinite Goodness delights in our well-fare; and thou hatest nothing that thou hast made. We adore Thee, O Lord, we bless Thee, we praise Thee, we magnify Thee, we give Thee thanks for thy great and glorious Goodness, and for the bounteous Exercises of it to the Sons of Men. We thank Thee that thou hast given us such a Being as we have, and hast made us so capable of Happiness: That we have Bodies and Senses suited to this very rich and plentiful World about us, and capable to take delight in the good things here, and for that the Earth is full of thy Goodness. But we Praise Thee yet more for the Spirit in Man, whereby we are capable of a rational and spiritual, and so a most Honourable and Angelical Delight in the Objects of our Senses; that we can please our selves with their beauty, order, wonderful contrivance and subserviency to each other, and that we are capable to see upon them the impresses and marks of thy glorious Wisdom, of thy mighty Power, of thy infinite Fulness, of thy Majesty and Glory. And we thank Thee, O Lord, most of all, for that thou hast been pleased to make us capable to know and meditate on thy Self; to chuse and love Thee, to desire and enjoy Thee, who art an infinite, Eternal Good, and in whose presence is fulness of joy. Oh how ready should our Hearts be at all times to say, Whom have we Heaven but Thee, and there is none on Earth that we can desire besides Thee! But alas! we are degenerated, we are fallen from our Original Excellency, we are sunk into Sensuality: We need to be put in mind and told wherein our true Happiness lies, and to be excited, urged and exhorted to pursue it: We hover here below, and seldom have any thoughts or desires moving upwards; the objects of Sense detain us with them

them, and we feed on Husks among Beasts; we stay and abide upon the lowest, and the smallest part of our happiness. Lord, we are miserable, we are undone, and shall perish for ever, if thy Pity do not rescue us from the Love of these low Things. Oh pardon our guilty, and heal our distempered Souls! Discover thy Self to us, and make us Love Thee; shed abroad thy Love abundantly in our Hearts; Make us to rise by the Creature to the Creator. Guide us by the Streams to Thee the Fountain of their goodness, and make us, as we ought, to love Thee above all things. Let us be governed by thy Love in the whole course of our lives, and readily deny our selves, to please Thee and keep thy Commandments. Let us firmly believe the glorious Things which thou hast prepared for them that love Thee; and draw our Hearts after them, to endeavour that our Treasure may be in Heaven in Immutable Things. And direct us, we pray Thee, so to pass through things Temporal, as that we finally lose not the things Eternal.

Have mercy; O Lord, upon all Mankind. Let the Earth be filled with Knowledge of the Lord, as Waters cover the Sea; and all Men be directed and led in the way to true Happiness. Give to all Nations Unity, Peace, and Concord. Pour down an abundant measure of thy Spirit upon thy Church, that the Gospel may run and be glorified from the rising of the Sun to the going down of the same. Let them prosper that love it, and let not the Gates of Hell ever prevail against it. We pray, especially for that part of it which thou hast graciously placed in these Nations, and hitherto wonderfully defended; Lord, make it a very fruitful Vineyard, and purge out of it all that is contrary to true Doctrine and Godliness. Bless, we pray Thee, our Gracious Queen and the Royal Family, with all Spiritual and Eternal Blessings; and give them a long and happy Possession of the Throne of these Kingdoms, to thy Glory and our Comfort. Bless all in Authority under them; help them truly, and indifferently to administer Justice, to the punishment of Wickedness and Vice, and to the maintainance of thy true Religion and Vertue. Give Grace, O Heavenly Father, to all Bishops and Curates, that they may both by their Life and Doctrine honour Thee, and guide thy People committed to them in the way of Blessedness.

Let

Let all the Subjects of this Realm be subject to Thee in Loyalty and Subjection, and due Obedience to those that are over them in Church and State; and let Piety, Love, Righteousness, and Peace, and Truth abound among us. We commend to thy Fatherly Goodness all that are in in any Distress and Affliction; all our Friends and Relations; we pray for our Enemies; do for all beyond what we are able to ask or think.

We humbly ask a comfortable and safe rest this Night, and that it may please Thee to make the out-goings of the Morning to rejoice. Let thy Word which we have heard this day guide our Conversations, and let us bring forth in them the Fruits of the Spirit; let not the Cares of this World, or the Deceitfulness of Riches choke the Word, and render it unfruitful; but grant we may live to the Glory of thy Name, and to the Peace and Salvation of our own Souls by Jesus Christ, in whose most comprehensive words, we sum up our Requests, saying,

OUR Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. Amen.

THE
Necessity of Obedience
TO THE
COMMANDS of GOD,
Proved and Stated.

Let us Pray:

PREVENT us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorifie thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mat. 7. 21.

Not every one that saith unto me Lord,
Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of
Heaven: But he that doth the Will of
my Father which is in Heaven.

HOW common a thing is it, among those that
have heard the glad Tidings of the Gospel, for
Men to take up a presumptuous reliance upon
the Merits of Jesus Christ, with neglect of Obedience

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to the Commands of God? Some of the most profligate and careless Sinners will hope to be saved! And if one ask them how? They will say, by the Merits of Jesus Christ. Many indulge themselves in their darling Sins, and yet hope to be saved by the Merits of Christ. And most certain it is, that the Doctrines of some Teachers give occasion to this presumption: They occasion Men to think there is nothing necessary to their Salvation but strong Believing, and so to endeavour nothing but that; and to rely upon the Righteousness of Christ, so as to neglect all Endeavour after any Righteousness of their own: And this Error and Delusion where it obtains, does often prove able to harden a Man against the most earnest Exhortations to leave his Sins, to subdue his Lusts, to mortifie his Passions; yea, and even against the most plain Rebukes of Providence for them, and to frustrate all other Means of Grace, and Conversion whatever: It is therefore of great Importance to remove it out of the way, and this I shall endeavour by discoursing on these words of our Saviour, which, if they had been well considered, together with many other plain Scriptures, it had prevented the entertainment of such Imaginations in the Minds of Men.

Our Saviour had been in a long Discourse, enforcing many of the Commands of the Moral Law. And now towards the close of this Discourse, he begins in this *Verse* to tell them of what importance and necessity it was to them to practice what he had taught. He plainly teaches, that no belief in him would avail them any thing, if they did not together with it keep the Commands of God. *Not every one* (says he) *that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; that is, Not he that only believes I am the true Messiah, and the Redeemer of the World, not every one that pretends to rely upon me for Salvation shall be saved, *But he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* He that lives a godly, right-

teous and sober life in conformity to his Commands. This is required to Salvation as well as the other: I come not to save Rebels continuing such, but to save them who set themselves to do my Father's Will, and to obey his Commands. And from henceforth to the end of his Sermon on the Mount, and to the end of this Chapter does our Saviour very evidently set himself to enforce, and urge the same thing.

The following Discourse on this Subject, I shall divide into these three Parts.

1. I shall shew that it is necessary, and required even now under the Gospel, that we set our selves to obey and keep the Commands of God, and to lead good and holy lives.

2. I shall shew how far we are bound to do this.

3. I shall make some Application.

In the first place, I shall make it evident that it is necessary, and required of Christians, that they set themselves to keep the Commands of God. This is required of all those who are grown Persons, and are come to the exercise of their Reason; they who have opportunity to do this, must do it, and they cannot be saved without this by any Merits or Mediation of Jesus Christ. Indeed Infants baptized, and dying in their Infancy, may be saved by the Merits of Jesus Christ, without the exercise and practice of good Works, which they had not capacity or opportunity to perform; but grown Persons cannot. Good works, or the keeping the Commands of God, are necessary to our finding Favour unto Salvation, as Conditions required to precede and concur, tho' they do not gain Favour and Salvation for us, as efficient or meritorious Causes. For proof of this, I shall, to make the Discourse as short as I can, only insist upon two Arguments, omitting many other which might be produced to this purpose, and they that I shall insist upon are these.

1. We shall find the Duties of the Moral Law frequently

quently urg'd and enjoined to Christians, by Christ and his Apostles.

2. So far is the Gospel from excusing our Obedience to the Laws of God, that it makes this the necessary Condition of our having an Interest in Jesus Christ, or in the Benefits of the Covenant of Grace.

1. We shall find if we look fairly into the New Testament, that the Duties of the Moral Law are there very frequently urg'd, and enjoin'd to Christians by our Lord, and his Apostles.

Our Lord himself says, *He came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them*, Mat. 5. 17. How can it then be a Doubt but that Christians are obliged to keep the Laws of God, when our Saviour says, *He came not to destroy, but to fulfil them?* That is, He came not to take away the Force and Obligation of any, but to fulfil and obey them himself, and to enforce the Observance of them by his Followers. His whole Sermon on the Mount, contained in the 5. 6. and 7th Chapters of *Matthew*, is made up of Moral Instructions, and he does therein plainly enforce the Moral Law of God; He rescues it from the corrupt Glosses and Interpretations of the *Pharisees*, and establishes and confirms the pure Precepts themselves. Again, our Saviour does enjoin at once the Observation of the whole Moral Law, as necessary to Salvation, under these two general Heads, The Love of God, and of our Neighbour. In *Luke* 10. it is said, *Ver. 25. A certain Lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit Eternal Life?* Jesus answers in the next Verse, *What is written in the Law? How readest thou?* He answering, said, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Strength, and with all thy Mind; and thy Neighbour as thy self:* Jesus replies, in *Verse 28. This do, and thou shalt live:* Intimating that he knew no other way to Life that he could take, than a diligent Endeavour, and

Application of himself to the keeping of the Commands of God: That this was the way always appointed to the Jews, and that he came not to teach or procure a new way of Salvation; He therefore intimates, that he might learn, in what was then written, the way of Salvation, that is, in the Writings of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ came not to alter the terms and way of Salvation, which had been appointed to all the World since the Fall of Man, but only to teach that way more perfectly.

Farther; The Apostles also after Christ, and by the Direction of the Holy Ghost poured upon them, do urge and require the Obedience of Christians to the Precepts of the Moral Law. Out of the many Instances which might be produced from every one of them to this purpose; I shall content my self to take but one from the Writings of *St. Paul*, and another from the *Epistle* of *St. James*, to shew how well these two Apostles agree in this Matter, and to contract this head. The Apostle *Paul* in *Eph. 6. 1, 2, 3*, says, *Children, obey your Parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy Father and Mother (which is the First Commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayst live long on the Earth.* We may see he presses there the same Duty which is enjoined in the 5th Commandment: And we may observe moreover, that he presses it as enjoin'd there. He quotes the 5th Commandment as an obliging Law, and a Rule still in force. And you may observe the Apostle has a little alter'd the Stile of the Promise, so that Christians may believe it applicable to themselves upon their performing this Command: To make them understand that as the Jews might expect, if God saw it good for them, to have a long life in the Land of *Canaan*, which was the Land God had given them; so Christians might expect to have a long and happy Life on Earth. And herein he plainly allows, and establishes the Force of all the Law that is Moral.

St. James

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St. James also in the 2d. Chap. of his *Epistle*, does enforce and urge the Obedience of Christians to the Moral Law: Nothing less can be the meaning of the 8th ver. *If ye fulfil the Royal Law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self, thou shalt do well:* And in the following Ver. he farther urges the Obedience to this general Precept; and says, *He that offends in one Point, is guilty of all;* and brings his Discourse to this point, That he who despises his poor Neighbour, and neglects works of Mercy, transgresses the Law, as well as he that should kill or commit Adultery; which things are also forbidden still, as he there intimates. So that this whole Series of Discourse urges the observance of the Ten Commandments; and both supposes and proves that Christians are, notwithstanding the coming of Christ, and the Gospel, oblig'd to govern themselves by the observance of them.

Thus, we see, that Jesus Christ and his Apostles have unanimously urg'd the Christian Church, to observe the Precepts of the Moral Law.

2. Another thing that proves the Necessity of Obedience, and a good Life under the Times of the Gospel, is this: That even the Gospel its self makes this the necessary Condition of an Interest in Jesus Christ. Good works indeed do not constitute a justified State; but they are necessary to the attaining it, as they are the necessary Conditions of our being justified by Christ. We are certainly not admitted into the Covenant of Grace, without a sincere Engagement to be the Lord's: Or without a solemn Vow and Promise to keep God's Holy Will and Commandments, and to walk in the same all the Days of our Lives. And our Church rightly teaches us the necessity of Obedience, in order to our being partakers of the Benefits purchased by Christ, by putting the solemn Promise and Resolution of it into the Baptismal Covenant. But I shall make this evident from the *Nature of that Faith* which

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is requir'd in order to our being justified by Christ; and from the *Command of Repentance* in order thereto; and from some very direct *Texts of Scripture*.

(1.) This will appear to us, if we consider the *Nature of that Faith*, which is required to make us partakers of the Benefits of the new Covenant. 'Tis said indeed, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting Life*. But we must let the Scripture tell us what it means by believing in him. To believe in Christ, is to rely upon him for Salvation; but 'tis relying upon him upon such Conditions as he appoints, and will admit of. And that Faith which will give us an Interest in him must purify our Hearts, and resign our Wills, and make us deny our selves, and take up our Cross, and follow him; which are things that he plainly requires of his Disciples: And this truth was taught in the Jewish Types and Shadows: The Altar indeed did sanctify the Gift, yet every thing might not be offer'd upon the Altar; it was only permitted them to set those things which were clean upon it, for an Offering to God. This Faith is express'd in Scripture by receiving Jesus Christ; And this must needs mean the accepting and closing with him as he is offer'd to us in the Scriptures: That we receive him as a King, and submit to his Laws, as a Teacher, and follow his Instructions, as well as that we receive him as a Priest, and rely upon the Merits of his Sacrifice. And even St. Paul himself does not say that any Faith will save a Man; but he defines the profitable and saving Faith to be that which *works by love*, Gal. 5. 6. So that 'tis only Faith join'd with Obedience that can help us; the Faith that produces this and is attended with it. This is that which St. John also evidently design'd to teach Christians in 1 Joh. 2. 3, 4. *Hereby (says he) we know that we know him (that is, Jesus Christ) if we keep his Commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar, and the truth is*

not in him. Which is as much as to say, He is not a true Christian, he has not a saving Faith in Christ, who does not with his Faith in him set himself to keep his Commandments. This he will have to be the Character of a true Faith, that it does produce, and is joyn'd with Obedience. And if we consider the matter but a little, we shall be forc'd to conclude, that 'tis a monstrous thing to pretend to have a true Faith in Christ, and yet to lead a wicked and ungodly Life. It is to pretend to join together the most disagreeing and inconsistent Things. What an Incongruity is it to believe, that Christ died for Sin, and yet to cherish and continue in Sin? to love that which did occasion the Death of our Lover and Friend! What an Incongruity is it to believe, that he died to redeem us from Death and Misery, and yet not to hold our selves oblig'd to live to him? to live as his, and according to his Commands! Since we profess to believe that we are bought with a Price, even the Price of his most precious Blood, we do therein profess, that he has laid us under the greatest Obligations that can be, *to glorify him with our Souls and Bodies, which are his.* So that it is inseparably annexed to the Nature of a true Faith, to make us know that we are oblig'd to do well, and to *purifie our Hearts*, and sanctifie our Lives, and make us to live well. It is to this purpose said, *That the Grace of God, which hath appear'd to all Men, bringing Salvation, teacheth us that denying all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World.* Thus we may see it is a purifying, sanctifying Faith, which the Gospel requires, such as is attended with, and does produce a holy and good Life.

(2.) Again; This appears in that Repentance is required as necessary to our partaking in the Merits of Jesus Christ. St. Peter says to the Jews, who were made sensible of their Sin in Crucifying the Lord of Glory, that they must *repent and be converted, that*

their Sins might be blotted out, Acts. 3. 19. And St. John preaches Repentance as necessary to an Interest in Christ, in 1 Joh. 1. 8, 9. where he says, *If we say we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* He makes forgiveness of Sin, and the Grace that dilivers from the power and pollution of it, to depend upon an humble and penitent Confession of Sin. Now what is Repentance, but a hearty Sorrow for Sin, and hatred of it for the Evil that is in it, and a resolution and endeavour accordingly to forsake all that is sinful and wicked; This then is absolutely required of them that would have the Pardon of their Sins, and would find favour with God through Jesus Christ.

Thus we see it may be drawn by consequence from some Scriptures, that our Obedience to the Commands of God, is the necessary Condition of Salvation by Christ.

(3.) In the last place I may make this evident by some direct and plain Texts of Scripture: And some of those many, that do most plainly and directly say this, are these, In Heb. 5. 9. we are told Jesus Christ is the *Author of Salvation to them that obey him*; Does not this plainly make the obeying him a necessary Condition of attaining Salvation by him? In our Text he expressly says, *None shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but such as set themselves to do the Will of God.* And St. Paul himself, who is the great Preacher of Justification by Faith, says in plain Terms, 1 Cor. 7. 19. *Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping the Commands of God.* I shall not need to add any more after that plain and full Scripture, 1 Pet. 1. 17. *If ye call on the Father, who without respect to Persons judgeth every Man according to his work; pass the time of your sojourning here in Fear.* The Apostle there plainly tells us, that our Faith

Faith in God, which is meant by *calling* on him; will not suffice us alone; that, *without respect of Persons*, without favouring them upon any other account alone, he judges every Man *according to his work*. He therefore urges us, *to pass the time of our sojourning here in Fear*; That is, To take heed to our ways, to be careful of the performance of our Duty; for this is plainly the necessary condition of finding favour with him, if he will judge every Man according to his works. That Faith in God which produces good works, or that Profession of the true Religion, which is accompanied with an holy Life, is the only Faith that will find Favour with God.

Thus I have sufficiently spoken to the First Head, which was to shew, that it is necessary, and required even now under the Gospel, that we set our selves to obey and keep the Commandments of God. I proceed now to speak to the Second, which was,

To shew how far we are bound to this; what it is in particular, that the Gospel, or Law of Grace does require of us in this Matter: This I think fit to speak to, That I may not discourage any by seeming to impose an impossible Task, or trouble the Minds of those that are tender; while I am endeavouring to awaken and excite others out of their neglect and presumption. It is granted then, and must be granted, that we cannot in this Life perfectly keep the Commandments of God. *In many things we offend all*, says the Apostle, *Jam. 3. 2.* And if we say that we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us; as St. John tells us, *1 Joh. 1. 8.* And our Saviour, in that Form of Prayer which he taught his Disciples for their daily Use, has put in a Petition for the Forgiveness of Sins; intimating therein, that we are likely to have a daily and constant occasion to beg the Remission of our Sins, as we shall have to desire our daily Bread; we shall want Forgiveness through the weakness of Grace, as constantly as the weakness of Nature requires the supply

ply of Food. I must tell you then how far we are obliged indispensibly to keep the Commands of God: This perfect and compleat Obedience not being possible to us, it is perhaps not proper to say, that it is indispensibly required of us. But these things following are required.

1. That there be in us a settled Purpose and Resolution to keep the Commands of God; as far as we can do this, it must be the deliberate and settled Intention of every Soul to do it. Like that of *David*, *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous Judgments.* We must in our Judgments esteem the Law of God to be in all things right and good; our Wills must chuse it as such, and we should be possess'd with a hearty and sincere Love of it: We must love his Law, and hate every false way. Every one must say to himself, This shall be the Guide and Rule of my Life: By this I will govern as far as I can, my Thoughts, and my Words, and my Actions. I will follow no common Customs or Fashions. I will regard no wicked Maxims of the World; I will not cherish or allow any Inclinations contrary to this Rule. Nothing must be allowed or tolerated in our Hearts or Lives, but what is according to the Law of God.

2. From hence there must spring a constant Care and Endeavour to cease from Evil, and do good. *I will take heed to my ways* (says *David*) *that I offend not.* And it cannot be that a Man can sincerely desire, and purpose to keep the Commands of God, and yet not diligently endeavour this. We must then exercise a constant Watchfulness and Observance over our Hearts and Ways. We must be willing to know our Duty, be ready to be convinced of it: We must endeavour to know it in the use of all fit means. We must endeavour to do well, and mind the keeping up our good Resolutions; we must strive against the perverseness, and backwardness of our Nature to do good;
silence

silence and dispise all Excuses, and watch for and lay hold of all opportunities of well-doing in any kind. In like manner we must constantly endeavour to abstain from doing evil. We must avoid Temptations as much as we can, and resist such as we cannot avoid. The Scripture says, *Resist the Devil, and he will fly from you.* We must endeavour to mortify, and weaken, and subdue all corrupt, and evil Inclinations that are in us. These things are meant, when we are bid to work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling; *And to strive to enter in at the straight Gate.* This then must be the grand Care and Concern of our whole Lives, that which we do chiefly mind, and that which must direct and influence every other Concern, namely, the keeping of the Commands of God.

3. We must for the most part actually perform our Purpose and Resolution; and live according to the Commands of God; and we must always abstain from any wilful Violations of them in gross and scandalous Sins. Certainly, he may not be denominated a good Man, that is not in the greater part good, and that does not most commonly perform the Duties God requires of him in his Place and Station. Therefore we must not live in the constant and habitual practice of any known Sin; or of such an one as we might know to be a Sin. The good Man will not allow, not excuse himself in any the least Sin: He may be surprised and drawn sometimes into that which is evil, but he will not run into it; and then there is nothing ill that shall be his constant Course; for if he be surprised into a Sin, he will not stay in it, as we may say, he severely rebukes himself for it; he earnestly repents, and sets himself to renew his Resolutions, and care to abstain from it for the future. And then besides, all gross and high acts and degrees of Wickedness must be totally forsaken; as we may learn from what the Apostle very plainly says, in *Gal. 5. 19, 20, 21.* *Now the works of the flesh are manifest* (says

(says he) *which are Adultery, Fornication, Unclean-
ness, Lasciviousness, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance,
Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, En-
vyings, Murthers, Drunkenness, Revellings, and
such like: Of the which I tell you before, as I have
also told you in times past, that they which do such
things, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* Such
things shew a Man to be out of a State of Grace and
Salvation; they cut him off from all right to the Be-
nefits of the Covenant of Grace: He that commits
such Enormities, is a Sinner; and his Repentance, and
recovery to a good condition, is not well assured, till
he has for some time heartily grieved for such Sin, and
liv'd at a great distance from it, and practised even
against Temptations and Provocations, the contrary
Vertues. These things are absolutely and indispen-
sibly required. And if we do this, God will look
mercifully upon our Infirmities; he will accept our
Obedience, tho' it be imperfect, and we shall be justi-
fied by him, upon the Account of the most perfect and
compleat Righteousness of Jesus Christ, tho' we can-
not work out such an one of our own.

Application. It remains now that I close up the
Discourse with a brief Application of what has been
said.

I. And in the first place, we may from hence justi-
fie the frequent Preaching up of Vertue and Holiness.
The too common corruption and wickedness of Men's
Lives, do greatly require such Discourses, and the
Gospel allows them. Shall we not urge and insist
upon those things which are necessary to Salvation?
Upon those things which Christ himself and his
Apostles much insisted upon, and made them the
aim and scope of all their Preachings and Writings?
Indeed without the frequent and earnest insisting upon
the necessity of a Holy Life, the corrupted Nature
of Man is mightily apt to abuse the pleasant
Doctrines

Doctrines of the Gospel; when we hear of a sure Atonement for Sin, we are apt to be less careful to avoid Sin, than we ought to be. It is certainly necessary, and very fitting to tell Men they have nothing to do with the Benefits and Privileges purchased by Christ, till they are obedient to his Laws, since this is very true; and it were to betray their Souls into Perdition, to be often telling what Christ has done for Mankind, and seldom to insist upon what he requires of them; Such would by no means deserve the Name of the most edifying Preaching; such might indeed build Men up in a presumptuous Faith, but not in the Holy Faith that is saving. And if the Gospel its self doth require Men's Obedience to the Laws of God, then the urging of this is true Gospel-Preaching; It is not obsolete, legal Preaching, nor is it dry, mean, moral Preaching: It is such Gospel-Preaching as Christ himself, and his Apostles employed themselves in. To this Truth we have the Testimony of one of the greatest Lights of the Church, since the Days of Inspiration; and he a zealous Advocate for free Grace, and all the glory of it, I mean St. *Austin*. This is to preach the Gospel of Christ (says he) *Evangelizare Christum*. Not only to say what things are to be believed concerning Christ; but also what things are to be observed and done, by him that comes to join or incorporate himself into the Body of Christ. And in speaking of the things that are to be believed concerning Christ, it is not enough (says he) to say whose Son he was; whence he came according to his Divinity; and whence according to his Humanity; what things he suffer'd, and why? What is the Virtue of his Resurrection? What Gifts of the Spirit he promised, and gave to the Faithful? But it should also be taught what sort of Men the Members must be, to whom he may, and will be the Head: What sort he requires, and makes, and loves, and redeems, and brings to everlasting Life. When these things

things are insisted upon (says he) then Christ is preached, *Christus Evangelizatur* (*Aug. de Fide & Operibus. Tom. 4.*) This Preaching then does not take Men off from relying upon Christ, it does not tend to make them depend upon themselves for Salvation, but it shews them in what way they must rely upon Christ for Salvation, that they may certainly succeed in the doing it.

2. To improve yet a little farther what has been said: We may thence learn the Vanity and Deceitfulness of their hopes of Salvation, who lead wicked and ungodly Lives. Such hopes no Men have any good ground for from the Holy Scripture; but we may every-where see them contradicted and discountenanced there. *If thou wilt enter into Life* (says our Saviour to one) *keep the Commandments.* And he plainly declares, that he will not own nor save any at last, for the meer Profession of the Gospel; no not tho' they had obtained the Faith and Gift of working Miracles in his Name, if they should be found to be Workers of Iniquity, as appears by the two next Verses which follow our Text, where we find him speaking thus, *Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works?* And then will I profess unto them, *I never knew you, depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity,* Matth. 7. 22, 23. It is truly a wonderful thing, that any should pretend to understand and preach the Gospel, and yet should decry the Necessity of good Works and a holy Life, in order to Salvation: When the Gospel it self teaches us thus on the contrary: *Without Holiness no Man shall see God,* Heb. 12. 14. *Know ye not* (says the Apostle) *that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God,* 1 Cor. 6. 9. and in 1 Tim. 6. 17, 18, 19. he directs him to teach his People thus; *Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches,*

Riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate: Laying up in store a good Foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on Eternal Life. How evidently does he there teach us, that the good Works of a holy Life are necessary, and conducing to our everlasting Happiness hereafter. These will lay up for us a good Foundation against the time to come: that is, they will profit us in another World. And if we abound in these, we may through the Merits of Jesus Christ, lay hold on eternal Life; that is, may comfort our selves hereupon, with the hopes of attaining it. The Vanity and Deceitfulness of hoping for this, without a good Life, we may easily learn and conclude, from the account which the Holy Scripture gives us of the Day of Judgment: For we are constantly told there, concerning that Day, that Men shall then be judged according to their Works, they shall receive according to what they have done in the Flesh, whether it be good or whether it be Evil, Joh. 6. Jesus Christ himself will not then favour or save any, but those who are righteous.

They that live in their Sins, and yet hope to be saved, expect to come to Heaven by the way to Hell: they depend upon the Mercy of God, and the Merits of Christ, without taking the only course to have an Interest in them.

3. There is not only folly and deceit in these Hopes; but also there is great guilt and provocation in them. For this is to turn the Grace of God into Wantonness, which is that *St. Jude, Ver. 4.* earnestly condemns, when we encourage our selves in Sin from the undertaking of the Redeemer: What is said of him in the Gospel, is an encouragement for Men to forsake their Sins; but not to continue in them. This is the greatest abuse that can be of redeeming Love; it is contrary to the end and design of it. The Mediator took the
Name

Name *Jesus*, to signify that his purpose is to *save his People from their Sins*. And indeed his design had been a very strange one, if he had come to procure a Dispensation for our Love of Infinite Goodness, for our Reverence of an Infinite Majesty, and of our Obedience to the Creator of all things; if he had come to dispense with the Laws of Equity and Justice, of Mercy and Charity, of Truth and Faithfulness towards our Neighbour; This were a design unworthy of the Holy Jesus, this had not been to glorify the Father; and how can it be but highly displeasing to impute to him such a Design, as this Opinion and Practice must be reckon'd to do? And yet farther. This is contrary to the *Obligation* of redeeming Love, as well as to the *Design* of it, and must needs be upon that account very displeasing. It was the greatest Instance of divine Love to give his only begotten Son to die for us, and then is it not the greatest Obligation to the Love of God? And is it not a most enormous and unjust requital to make this an encouragement to the living in hatred against him? To live in constant rebellion and contempt? This must needs give the highest and most guilty Aggravation to the Sins of Men that can be. Let us consider then how much we are obliged by the Love of God to love him; and that *if we love him, we must keep his Commandments*.

THE
PRAYER.

O Most merciful and gracious God; thy Mercy is everlasting, and thy Truth endures from Generation to Generation. Thou hast helped us in our low Estate through the greatness of thy Mercy: When we had endured our selves deserving of everlasting Misery, and utter Rejection from thy favour and care, thou didst then take care for us, and laidst help upon one that is mighty, and able to save to the uttermost: Oh who can conceive, or express the Love of God to us in Christ Jesus! It passes knowledge. We give Thee, O Lord; most humble and hearty Thanks for this thy unspeakable Gift. We thank Thee for our Saviour's excellent Doctrins and Instructions, whereby he shews us the way to Happiness; for his most holy and good Life, whereby he leads us in the way to it, and is become an encouraging Pattern and Example of well-doing; We bless Thee for his meritorious Death, whereby he has made an Attonement for our Sins, has purchased for us thy sanctifying Grace, and thy infinite, eternal Favour. Oh what reason have we to say, what shall we render unto the Lord for all his Benefits! How many ways, O Lord, hast thou deserved our highest Praises, our supream Affections, and our best Obedience! But, Oh how unsensible have we, ungrateful Wretches, been of this thy great Mercy! How backward and slow to comply with the just and reasonable Terms of Salvation! We are loth to part with our Sins, even for the Love of Jesus, or to wean our Affections from this World, for the hopes of Heaven. Yea, we are apt to fall into the guilty and pernicious Folly of turning the Grace of God into Wantonness, of encouraging our selves to continue in our Sins, upon presumption on thy Mercy in Christ Jesus, and of expecting Salvation by him while we neglect the terms and conditions of obtaining it. O Lord, awaken us at length to a due and wise Care of our own Souls: Of thy infinite Mercy, pardon our past Neglects, and give us, for the sake of

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Jesus

Jesus Christ, what thou requirest, that we may be partakers of the great Salvation. Give us an unfeigned Repentance for all our past Transgressions; stedfast and sincere purposes of new Obedience. Give us an humble, lively Faith in him, such as may engage us to follow him, make us love and chuse his Commands; ready to deny our selves for his sake, and to devote our selves entirely to him, to live to him that died for us; let it bring forth much fruit in a diligent and industrious Obedience, and seek and expect our acceptance and reward; only by Virtue of his Merits and spotless Righteousness. Let such a Faith, we pray Thee, be formed or promoted in us by the Ordinances we have this day enjoyed. Let us lie down in peace with Thee this Night, and repose our selves under the protection of thy Providence. If it please Thee, that we shall awake again in this World, let our Hearts be full of a thankful Sense of thy Mercies, and a Concern to shew forth thy Praise in the Course of our Lives.

We humbly recommend to thy Mercy and Favour all Mankind; beseeching Thee to enlighten those that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of Death; to bring into the way of thy Truth, all such as have erred and are deceived: To replenish thy Church abundantly with the Gifts and Graces of thy good Spirit; to comfort and relieve any of thy Servants, that are desolate and afflicted; to prosper those that seek the Peace of thy *Jerusalem*. We implore thy Mercy upon the Land of our Nativity: Lord, let Peace and Righteousness, Charity and Piety, settle and abound among us. Rule and guide thou our Rulers in thy Fear. Protect and bless their Persons, and prosper all their designs for thy Glory and our Welfare. Teach our Teachers: Bless, comfort, and encourage thy Ministers, both in Church and State, with a Loyal, Obedient, Peaceable and loving People. Grant that we may all live to thy Glory through Jesus Christ our Lord. In whose own words we farther say,

OUR Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. Amen.

THE
Great Duty

OF
THANKFULNESS,

Urged and Directed.

Let us Pray :

Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1 Theff. 5. 18.

In every thing give Thanks :

THere is an exceeding great evil and disorder, which we may too frequently observe in the World, and which every Man's reason condemns in others, and yet all are apt to be often guilty of it themselves : It is, that we do commonly remember long, and retain a very deep resentment of an Injury, whether it be real, or but an imagined one; but we

soon forget the Benefits we receive, and lose the Impressions of them. Thus do Mankind often deal with one another, and thus also do they behave themselves towards God. Tho' he cannot wrong or injure us, yet we are apt to think he does so, when he does in any thing displease us, and we behave our selves towards him, as if he did: We murmur against him, and grow discontented and froward, are ready to think 'tis in vain to serve him, and to throw off our Duty. And on the other side, we do at the same time forget his Benefits, and take no notice of what we have, many times, through desire of what we want. We are very earnest and importunate in our Requests for what we would have, and are cold in our Thanksgivings, or neglect to be thankful at all, when we have obtain'd it. The Spirit of God taking notice of this Fault in Mankind, repeats his Instructions in Holy Scripture to the contrary. He bids us take care to join with all our Prayers, Thanksgivings, in *Phil. 4. 6.* he says, by the Apostle, *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God:* However desirous ye are, however solicitous to obtain what ye want of God, be sure to be thankful for what ye have. Again, in this Chapter where our present Text is, he joins the Command of Thanksgiving with that of Prayer; the 17th. Verse bids us *Pray without ceasing*, and this 18th. says, *In every thing give Thanks*; whatever your condition be, recommend it to Almighty God by Prayer; and how long soever it pleases God to deny or delay what you desire, yet continue to pray: And with your Prayers, remember also to give Thanks. *In every thing give Thanks*; That is, in every state and condition, endeavour to retain always a Sense of the Divine Benefits, to praise him for what he has done for you; and be free from all hard Thoughts of God, and undecent Murmuring against him. I confess this command in
this

this Place seems to be chiefly directed to those Holy and Good Men, who are the peculiar Favourites of Heaven by the Interest of Jesus Christ. But, because this Duty is urged more generally elsewhere, and there is no Duty required of such good Men, but it is also required of all Men, at least by consequence, and as all Men are required to be good; I shall therefore take the Words as exhorting to an Universal Duty: And I conclude from them, that all Men are bound to express a thankful Acknowledgment unto God of the Benefits they receive from him; and that in all Estates and Circumstances whatsoever.

In discoursing upon this Matter, I shall endeavour these two Things.

1. To prove that every Man has Reason for Great Thankfulness to Almighty God.

2. To direct the right Expressions and Declarations of our Thankfulness.

In the first Place, I shall endeavour to make it evident, That every Man has some reason to be thankful to God; some reason to praise and love him, and to be patient and contented in every Condition. And this, I think will evidently appear upon the making good the following Particulars.

1. Let us consider that all Men are in some measure Partakers of the Divine Benefits. There is not one among the Race of Mankind, that can justly reckon himself not at all obliged to God. Every Man is beholden to God for his *Being*; for the *Preservation* and Continuance of his Being so long as he subsists, and for some Things that *comfort him* in his Being; and without doubt the *Death of Christ* is in some sense an Universal Benefit.

Every Man is beholden to God for *that Being* which he has. *It is God that made us, and not we our selves.* And from that sort of Being, which God has given us are we engaged to be thankful. We were made but little lower than the Angels, and crowned with Ho-

nour and Dignity, as the *Psalmist* says of all Men *Psal. 8.* The meanest Man is next in Dignity to them in the Order of the Creation. It is an exceeding Honour of our Bodies, and their greatest Worth and Commendation, that they are made fit to serve and entertain so noble a Guest as an Immortal Spirit; and this Honour the most deformed, the weakest, and the most crazy Body has belonging to it. But our greatest Worth and Dignity lies in the Soul which God has given us. There is in every Man an excellent Spirit, which is capable of very great Things; however it is in some Men wretchedly neglected and depressed. By this are all Men capable of the sublime Knowledge of the Creator, capable to love, and praise and delight themselves in him; by such a Being then we are capable of Happiness to a great and excellent Degree, and even of the highest kind of Happiness that can be; as we can enjoy or delight ourselves in him, who is the highest Good. And our Immortal Soul renders us capable of everlasting Happiness in the Eternal Fruition of an Infinite, Eternal Good. Every Man may reach this Happiness, if he will. This is that he was made and designed for, and no Man shall fall short of it, but by his own Default. Thus our Being then should engage us to be thankful to God that gave it.

Farther; 'Tis to Him we owe the *Continuance* of our Being; He supports and maintains us in this Life while it lasts, and after it in the other. This is a continual Obligation to Thankfulness; it is a continual Creation. As no Being can make its self, so none can preserve or continue its self at all; but all Things have always a most necessary Dependence upon the Great Creator. We ought then all of us to acknowledge, it is he that holds our Soul in Life. And while He continues this Life, He obliges us in that we are so long capable in some measure to see and enjoy the pleasant and good Things of this World.

If we have good and vertuous Souls, and are free from Envy and Malice, we can see with Satisfaction and Pleasure, the Happiness and Satisfaction of others, though we are not so happy our selves; especially may this please us in those that are vertuous and good, and in those that are dear to us. Besides, while a Man lives, though it be in an afflicted State, he has that important Term and Space lengthened to him wherein alone he can make his Peace with God, and fit and prepare his Soul for Heaven. The Time of this Life is the only Space allowed us for the seeking and serving the Interest of Eternity. And if our Life be continued, though in the midst of continual or succeeding Vexations and Miseries; as these give us Opportunity of exercising long Patience, and invincible Trust in God, the most commendable Love to him, and the most difficult Resignation and Submission; so we have herein an Opportunity to gain the greater Applause hereafter, the brighter Crown of Glory, and the more excellent Degrees of Reward, by a *patient continuance in well-doing*. We have reason then to be thankful for the continuance of our Being, even in such a State as this.

Farther; There is no Man but does enjoy at one time or other, and in a greater or less measure, the *Comforts of this present Life*. Those Things which do for the time elevate and cheer him, and make him joyful and merry. Every Man has some Intervals of bright and calm Weather; no one's Day is always cloudy and stormy: This Life is to none a State of pure Misery. We are born to Trouble in this World, yet none do meet with only Trouble and Affliction. Besides, there is commonly a Mixture of Good and Evil in every Condition: Every inconvenient State has some Conveniencies to allay it. These we may find out if we will impartially consider our Circumstances; And from thence we shall always have some reason to be thankful.

Lastly, The Death of Christ is without doubt in some Sense an Universal Benefit. *Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners* : He by His own Oblation of himself once offered, has made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World. He has by His Death brought it to pass that every Man upon his Repentance and Faith in Him may be saved ; that Salvation may be offered to all ; therefore He bid his Disciples go and preach the Gospel to all : And this Salvation may be obtained by all, to whom it is offered, if they are not wanting to themselves : None of them perish, but by their own Perverseness. All in the Christian Church are beholden for the Knowledge of God and Christ, which is offered to them ; for the Means of Grace and Salvation.

Thus it appears that all Men are in some measure Partakers of the Divine Benefits.

2. *Another Thing that makes This an Universal Duty*, is, That God has with such admirable Wisdom distributed his Gifts among Men, that every one almost has in some respects or other the Advantage of some other Men. As none are in this Life perfectly miserable, so we can see none that are perfectly and compleatly happy. No Man shall have good reason to think himself worse dealt with, and harder used by God's Providence, than all Men besides him. There is hardly a Man but may say, If I want what others have, I may also see some at least of others wanting what I have, and what I delight in, what I would not be without, and perhaps would not exchange with many for theirs. If the Rich have greater Dainties, the Poor have usually the stronger and better Appetites : The Labourer has greater Strength, and more Health many times than he that lives at ease. If one Man has less Honour than another, he has less Care and Trouble too ; an obscure Station is blest with greater Safety, is exposed to less Envy than the contrary. How many

many Cares, and Griefs, and Fears do attend Riches and Greatness, of which the mean, and poor Man may say, I have none of these to trouble me! It pleases God many times to lodge a vertuous and brave Soul in a deformed and contemptible Body, and oftentimes are great Beauty, or Strength, and great Folly joined together. It was very fitly replied by the Philosopher, who being pitied by one for the Loss of a Farm, answered his Condoler thus, You have but one Field, and I have yet three left, and why should not I then rather pity and grieve for you? If our Mind is apt to grow sick with Envy, or discontent at seeing the Advantages in some Respects which others have of us, we should cure them again by reflecting on those which in other Respects perhaps we may have of them, or of some other Persons. And thus may every Man see something in his Condition to be thankful for, upon a fair Comparison of it with that of other Men.

3, It is yet another Ground of Thankfulness common to all Men; That the Gifts which we receive from God, are undeservedly and freely bestowed upon us. As He is the sole Fountain of all the Good we enjoy; so He is the absolute and free Dispenser of all His Gifts. *God is a Debtor to no Man.* We cannot draw any of His Blessings from Him by previous Merit. It was the meer and free Goodness of God, which moved Him to give us our Being: Certainly before we were, we could not oblige Him: All our Faculties and Powers then are Free Gifts, and render us indebted and obliged to Him. Therefore no Exercise of These in any Service of Him, can merit any thing from Him; for in all we do, we only pay our own Debt; if indeed we could do so much as that. Well might the Apostle make that Challenge, *Who hath given any thing to God, and it shall be recompensed to him again?* Romans 11. 5. He can receive no Advantage from his Creatures, and therefore

fore He designs none to Himself in what He bestows upon them. He may then very justly expostulate with our Murmuring and Discontent, as the Householder in the Parable, *Friend, I do thee no Wrong: It is not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?* We should always consider he is at liberty whether he will give what we ask of him or not. What we want is his, and what we have is so too, even whilst we have it; and so he is at liberty also to take that away. We are entirely beholden to him for all that we have; And should not this make us always thankful? He deserves this from us, if he gives and continues any thing to us, since he does this freely. Since God is kind, let us be ashamed to be unjust; since he gives us the good Things, which we do not deserve from him, let us not be so guilty as to deny him the Praise and Thanksgiving, which he does deserve from us. Should we not thank him for those things which we cannot demand of him, which he gives, and needs not give us? Tho' we have not all that we desire, yet since what we have is more than we deserve, we ought sure to be very thankful for this.

4. Another ground of Thankfulness common to all Men is, there is none of us but have forfeited all the Mercies which God has ever bestowed upon us. It is true, that before we had a Being, we could not deserve not to be made; we could not offend God, nor provoke him to deny us our Being; for that which is not, can do nothing: But it may be consider'd, that he who made us, knew before with what perverseness, and rebellion, and ingratitude we would use the Beings he should give us: He fore-saw all the Sins and Provocations of our Lives, and yet he brought us into Being; and has made us capable to be greatly Happy, tho' he knew we would deserve to be Miserable. And since we came to an ability of exercising the Powers he has given us; we have not only laid no Obligations upon him to do us good, but

but have also deserved the contrary. We are all Sinners, and fall short of the Glory of God; we have not answered the End of our Being, and so have rendered our selves utterly unworthy of all his Mercies. We brought into the World with us at our Birth a sinful Nature, possess'd with Enmity against God, dispos'd to rebel, and such as did deserve to be crush'd in its Infancy. He has notwithstanding that, nourish'd and brought us up, and we, notwithstanding his Favour, have rebelled against him. He took us into the tender Arms of his Providence, when we first came into the World, when he might have thrown us immediately into Hell, as guilty in our first Parents: He suffer'd us to be admitted into his Church, and wash'd away that Guilt in the Laver of Baptism. Let us consider how ill we have requited this Kindness: How much we have forgotten him, in whom we live, move, and have our Being: How we have broke his just and good Laws, despis'd to be like him in Holiness, wilfully polluted our selves with Sin, affronted his rightful Sovereignty over us, abus'd his free Gifts, and dishonour'd him with what we ought to have us'd to his Glory: I say, let us consider these things, and wonder that he does any thing for us, rather than murmur at any time that he does no more. Let us never think our selves hardly dealt with, while we enjoy any thing that is good, since we deserve none, since we have actually forfeited all. And thus, I suppose it appears, Every Man has Reason for the Practice of this Duty: It is incumbent upon all to be contented and easie under God's Dispensation, and to be thankful for the measure of good that they have; not only is this due from the rich and prosperous, but also, even from the poor and afflicted.

I proceed now to the Second Part of the Discourse, which is to direct to the right Expressions and Declarations of our Thankfulness to God for his Benefits. And this (we must know) is not fully performed in
a short

a short Ejaculation now and then lifted up to God: But the Heart that is truly and habitually thankful, will constantly endeavour, and for the most part perform all that is contained in the following Particulars.

1. We must take notice of, and own the Divine Benefits. We must acknowledge God's continual Care of us, and Kindness to us: Own it was he that made us to differ in all the advantages that we have above others. When a Man prospers in the World, he must not ascribe his Prosperity to his own Industry or Skill, nor to a blind Chance; but always to the Providence of God, and be ready to say, 'tis he gives him all things. We must observe and value the Divine Benefits, it is great Unthankfulness to despise them; we must take heed that we do not so regard and magnify our Wants, as to overlook our Mercies, and to think that we are not beholden to God. We must receive his Favours and Obligations as such, reckon our selves beholden to him for what he gives us. We must preserve a fresh and lively remembrance of God's Mercies and Deliverances; as *David* charges himself to do, *Psal. 103. 2. Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits.* Thus our Mind and Thoughts are to be employed about these.

2. We must praise him for his Mercies in solemn and devout Thanksgivings. In these we must express by words the former inward Sense of his Benefits, and so be thankful in Heart, and in our words say to him, as *David, Psal. 30. I will extol Thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made mine Enemies to rejoice over me*, when at any time he has delivered us from Enemies. Say, *O Lord, my God, I cried unto Thee, and thou hast healed me, and brought up my Soul from the Grave, thou hast kept me alive from going into the Pit*, when he has deliver'd from Sicknes. Say, for daily Mercies, *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing*

sing praises unto thy Name, O most high: To shew forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night; as in Psal. 92. 1, 2. The Book of *Psalms*, as it was the exercise of extraordinary and inspir'd Devotion, is an excellent Repository of the best Expressions of all sorts for the exercise of our Devotion by: Out of which, we shall do well to furnish our selves with the wise and acceptable forms of Thanksgiving which are therein, for the better performance of this Duty.

3. We must express our Thankfulness in Deeds, as well as in Thought and Word: And this must take in an universal Obedience to his Commands; we ought to charge our selves with this Task, and constantly endeavour to perform it through the whole course of our Lives. Nothing can be more absurd, than for an habitual Sinner to pretend to any gratitude towards God: Is he to be reckoned thankful, who affronts him continually? who lives in those Practices, which he knows are most ungrateful and displeasing to him? Is this the right way of acknowledging a Benefactor, to do him all the Injury that we can? Let us then study and learn his Laws, that we may know what will please him, and then apply our selves industriously to do it. And whatever we have and are, should be all devoted to him, and employed, as far as it is capable to be, to the serving of his Honour and Glory, *1 Cor. 10. 31.* *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do (says the Apostle) Do all to the Glory of God.* This is the just End of all his Gifts, and to serve that end, must needs be the expected way of our Thanksgiving for them.

And that end may be served, and another Obligation answered too, and that when we employ, (as he requires we should do) what he gives us, as much as we can to the good of Mankind. We must desire and endeavour to be useful to others, not live to our selves

ſelves alone. We muſt not be proud of our advantages, but ſerviceable with them. In *Heb. 13. 15.* we are exhorted to offer the *Sacrifice of Praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our Lips, giving Thanks to his Name:* But the Apoſtle immediately adds, *To do Good and communicate, forget not; for with ſuch Sacrifice God is well-pleaſed:* He intimates the former is required and due, but we muſt not ſatiate our ſelves with that alone, but he requires alſo another Sacrifice, even that of Good Works and Offices of Charity. All the Good that we have power and opportunity to do for our Neighbour, relating to his Soul or his Body, his Reputation or Eſtate, we muſt be ready charitably to perform; and this is to be always done in the beſt way to ſerve His Intereſt; we muſt not only regard our own Advantage.

Thus ſhould all the ſeveral Callings, Offices and Dignities of Men be managed: And thus may all Men expreſs their Thankfulneſs to God for His Benefits in the Buſineſs of their worldly Callings; thus they may conſecrate Theſe, and make them Religious.

Thus I have alſo finiſhed the Second Thing propoſ'd. Now to conclude; That we may the better excite our ſelves to theſe Things, let us farther conſider at our leaſure,

The Greatneſs of God to whom we are beholden, together with our own Meaneſs. He that gives us all we have, is a Being infinite and perfect; He is eternally happy in the Enjoyment of Himſelf, has no need of any of his Creatures, nor can have any advantage from them: Yet has he taken Care of us continually; he watches over us every moment, to defend us from Miſchief, to ſupply our Wants, to protect our Enjoyments, and to ſupport our frail Lives. Juſtly may we ſay with the *Pſalmiſt, Lord, what is Man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man that thou viſiteſt him?*

Let

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Let us assure our selves too, that the best way to preserve the Benefits we enjoy, is, to use them rightly, and to be duly thankful for them.

Let us reckon also that this must needs be necessary to the Acceptance and Success of our Prayers for such Things as we want, to use well, and be thankful for what we have already obtained.

Lastly, Let us consider, that a thankful Frame of Mind, such as is sensible of God's Mercies, that which sees its own Advantages, and thinks upon the good Things which it enjoys, that uses them as God requires, with Wisdom and Reason, and a good Conscience; such a one keeps the Soul always easie and calm, always chearful and contented; such a Person fully enjoys what he has, and tastes the Sweetness of it. Whereas he who murmurs and complains, who is never satisfied, nor contented, is always unhappy: He who pores only upon his Wants, and what he desires, who is impatient under every Affliction and Cross, and abuses himself and his Enjoyments in guilty Excesses; such a Man can never feel any Rest or Quiet in his Mind, he is always troubled and uneasie; he imbitters his Palate so, that he cannot rightly relish any good thing he has, is a burthen to himself, and indeed does severely punish upon himself his own Iniquity and Ingratitude. Let us then in every thing give Thanks, and say, To God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Thanks and Praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE PRAYER.

ALmighty and most Gracious God, Thou art Good, and doest Good ; Thou art abundant in Goodness. We Thine unworthy Servants, do give Thee most humble and hearty Thanks for all Thy Goodness and Loving Kindness, which Thou hast graciously shewn to us, and to all Men. We bless Thee for our Creation, O Lord; for that Thou hast made us little lower than the Angels, and crowned us with Honour and Dignity ; and for that Thou hast plentifully furnished this World with Good Things for our Use. We own, O Lord with all Thankfulness, that Thou hast hitherto preserved us ; Thou hast taken Care of us ever since we came from our Mother's Womb ; Thou hast defended us from innumerable Evils, which always compass us about : Thou hast given us all that we have enjoyed of the Good Things of this World, for they are Thine, and Thou dost dispose of them, as seemeth good to Thee ; and by Thy Blessing upon Thy Gifts have they been sufficient to support and comfort our mortal Life. But above all, we bless, we praise Thee, we magnifie Thee for Thy inestimable Love in the Redemption of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the Hopes that we have of obtaining Everlasting Glory and Happiness by the Virtue of His Merits, and by the Guidance of Thy Good Spirit. O Lord, give us, we beseech Thee, a due and deep Sense of all Thy Mercies, make our Hearts unfeignedly thankful ; make us ready to acknowledge, that we are less than the least of Thy Mercies ; that in all Thou givest, Thou owest us nothing : Make us humbly sensible and ashamed of all our Transgressions against Thee, of our base and ungrateful Returns to Thy Mercies ; that instead of winning us to love and serve Thee, they have encouraged us to transgress, and have been used in Rebellion against Thee. O Lord, of Thy infinite Mercy, pardon all our past Unthankfulness ; and let thy Grace

make

make us set our selves for the future, to shew forth Thy Praise, not only with our Lips, but in our Lives; by giving up our selves to Thy Service, and by walking before Thee in Holiness and Righteousness all our Days. O Lord, make us to go in the Path of Thy Commandments. And from Thy Mercy and Goodness, let us learn to shew Mercy, and to do Good according to our Power and Opportunity, communicating to the Necessities of others; which is a Sacrifice well-pleasing unto Thee. And do Thou, O Lord, continue the Exercises of Thy Goodness to us, till Thou hast made us perfectly and compleatly happy in the Enjoyment of Thy Self.

We humbly implore Thy Mercy and Favour for all Mankind. Oh that Thy Way may be made known upon Earth, and Thy Saving-Health among all Nations, that the People may praise Thee, O God, yea, that all the People may praise Thee. Bless, we pray Thee, Thy Church, and defend it from all Spiritual and Temporal Enemies. Remove out of it all false Doctrine, Heresie and Schism, Envy, Hatred, Malice, and all Uncharitableness; Hardness of Heart and Contempt of Thy Word and Commandments. We intreat Thee graciously to watch over that Part of it which Thou hast planted amongst us; defend it from secret Attempts and Plots, and from open Violence, from all the Enemies of Thy True Religion established among us, and make it, we pray Thee, a glorious Church in the Eminent Gifts and Vertues of the Members of it. Bless our Queen and all that are put in Authority under Her, with great Wisdom and Understanding, with a Zeal for Thy Glory, and the Subjects Well-fare. Teach those that are Subjects, each in their severall Places, to do their own Business, and to study Submission and Quietness. Continue, we pray Thee, and encrease the Royal Family; enrich them with thy heavenly Grace, and prosper them with all Happiness. We humbly recommend to Thy Mercies, our Friends, Relations, and even our Enemies; and all that are in Adversity.

We render Thee Thanks, O Lord, for all Thy Mercies, of this Day in particular; but especially for the Liberty of Thy House, and for the Means of Grace we have there enjoyed. Hear, O Lord, the Prayers we have offered to Thee. Bless Thy Word and Sacraments to us; when=

whenever we enjoy Them, let Them be Thy Power to our Salvation. We humbly beg Thy Protection for this Night and evermore, even unto Thy heavenly Kingdom, for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory World without end.

OUR Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this Day our daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into Temptation: But deliver us from Evil. Amen.

THE

THE PLEASANTNESS OF RELIGION,

Demonstrated and Improved.

Let us pray :

Prevent us, O Lord, in all our Doings with thy most gracious Favour, and farther us with thy continual Help, that in all our Works begun, continued and ended in Thee, we may glorifie Thy Holy Name, and finally by Thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prov. 3. 17.

Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness.

THese Words are spoken of *Wisdom*, as you may see by *Verse 13.* of this Chapter, where *Solomon* begins the Commendation of That; saying, *Happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the Man that getteth Understanding: The Merchandize of it is better than the Merchandize of Silver, and the*

Gain thereof than fine Gold; She is more precious than Rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her: Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honour; then he adds, Her ways are ways of Pleasantness. And by Wisdom (of which, he says these great things) he means Religion, or the Wisdom of good and vertuous living; to which the Scripture it self does elsewhere plainly give that Name, Job 28. 28. *The Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom; and to depart from Evil, is Understanding.* The Ways of Wisdom, then, means the Practice of Religion and Vertue: This he says, is very pleasant: He has Joy and Pleasure in abundance, who steadily lives in a religious and good course of Life.

This is the import and sense of these Words. And if this be true, here is a very sensible and important inducement to a good Life contained in them. There is nothing usually more powerful and attractive with Mankind, than Pleasure; nothing which they more earnestly, or more universally covet: If then it can be made appear, that there is a great deal of this even in well-doing, this may be a means to allure Men to the trial of it; and to divert them from those courses of Wickedness, which draw many into Everlasting Perdition by the allurements of Pleasure. To make this good, and to prove what Solomon here says, will be the chief business of this Discourse.

I shall undertake to do this under these two following Heads of Discourse.

1. Religion is very pleasant in all the proper Acts or Exercises of it, or in the Performance.

2. It is exceeding grateful and pleasant to a Man's Reflection or Review. These two things I hope to prove, to the Conviction of every one that will but soberly consider what shall be said to them. I shall not content my self to shew that these things are so; but shall also make it appear how it comes to pass that

that they are; and that, for the sake of alluring those Persons to the practice of Religion, who are yet Strangers to it. They who practise Religion, find that these things are so by experience, and have the very sensible proof of it, which is better far, than what any one else can give them: but they who are yet Strangers to it have no experience of the matter, and must be convinc'd by Reason and Argument; and the best way to convince them, is to shew *how this comes to pass*, and upon what Grounds and Foundations it must be, that both the performance of good and religious Actions, and the Reflection upon them are exceeding pleasant.

I begin then with the first of these. The practice of Religion is very pleasant in all the proper *Acts and Exercises of it*, or in the Performance: And the Ground and Foundation of this, is the Principle from whence they all proceed: And the Principle from whence all true and sincere Religion proceeds and springs, is Love; and that must needs render it highly pleasant in the Practice of it. This must be the Principle and Spring of true and sincere Religion. All the Duties we perform towards God or Man, must proceed from Love to God and Man. This must be the Principle of our good Actions, and wherever true Love is, it will be a Principle of good Actions. All the instances of Duty required of us are but such things, as Love it self will put us upon; such as Love naturally suggests, and does incline to. He that truly loves God, cannot chuse but seek what will please him, and endeavour to do all that; and he *must* endeavour to avoid whatever would offend God. He *must* delight to contemplate the Divine Perfections; to think upon the Object that he loves; to adore and worship God; to seek and promote the Love and Honour of him. So he that loves his Neighbour sincerely, *must* delight in, and desire the Welfare and Happiness of Men; he *must* endeavour

to promote it as much as he can ; and will be far from wishing, or endeavouring any Evil to any Man, or from delighting in what does happen to any.

And this, now, is even a Demonstration of the Pleasantness of a Religious Life ; that all of it is nothing else but the Exercise of Love. He that is driven to do his Duty by Fears and Terrors, performs indeed an ungrateful Task, and goes on in these Ways with Reluctancy and Sorrow : But he that is drawn with the Cords of Love, follows with Joyfulness. He will run and not be weary, whom Love inspires : He minds not, is not discouraged with any Ruggedness of the Way ; but is rather pleased with Difficulties, and put on, than troubled or retarded, because they give him opportunity to express the greater Love. This renders the Labours of Religion easie, and even Sufferings delightful. *I take pleasure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses for Christ's sake*, says a great Lover of Jesus, 2 Cor. 12. 10. It was the strength of Love in the Primitive Followers of Jesus, which made them very laborious and diligent in Religion, and made them suffer much, even to the most cruel and tormenting Deaths, and do both with unspeakable Joy and Pleasure. They prov'd what a great Lover of God said long ago, Cant. 8. 6, 7. *Love is strong as Death : Many Waters cannot quench Love, neither the Floods drown it.* All the Task of Love is pleasant, and nothing is counted hard or uneasie which that enjoyns us.

I proceed now to the second Proof of this Truth ; to shew, That the Practice of Religion is exceeding pleasant and grateful to a Man in the Review or Reflection upon it, and how this comes to pass. This, I may say depends upon these three Things : 1. That the Actions of Men are in some measure imputable to themselves ; even good Actions are so. 2. It is always a very grateful and pleasing Thing to a Man, to applaud,

and

and commend, and value himself. 3. There is that in the Nature of good Actions, or inseparably belonging to them, which will give a Man that does them, very just and reasonable Ground to applaud and commend himself for doing them.

I shall insist a little upon each of These, that they may be the more evident, or the better observ'd.

I. The Actions of Men are in some measure imputable to themselves; even their good Actions are so. We are not carried by meer Destiny and Fate to what we do, whether it be Good or Evil; but do act with Judgment, such as it is, and with Choice and Freedom of Will. How much soever any Good we do, is derived from the Influence of the Divine Grace upon us, and may be ascribed to that, yet it may also be so far ascribed to our selves, as that a Man may enjoy the comfortable Applauses of his own Conscience for the doing it; and he may be applauded, and rewarded by God for it. God has not made Man, says one of the Ancients, (*Just. Mart.*) like the Beasts or Trees, without any Capacity to judge, or chuse, but has made him capable of both, and therefore are his Actions imputable to himself. And without this, as he tells us, there would be nothing in our own Power; and then if one Man be good, another wicked, the former would not be worthy of any Praise or Reward, nor the latter deserve to be condemned or punished. Yea, there would be no Vertue nor Vice in the World, because no free and chosen Actions. And that there is such Freedom in Human Actions, as that they may be justly imputed to themselves, is evident, he says, from such Places of Scripture as these: God says by his Prophet to the People of *Israel*, *He had set Life and Death before them*; which supposes in them a Freedom and Liberty to chuse which of these they would have for their Portion and Reward. And *Joshua* says to the same People, concerning the Worship of the True God, the God of *Israel*, and the false Gods of the Heathen,

Chuse ye this Day whom ye will serve. It is certain, that since Rewards and Punishments are prepared and designed for the Good or Evil Actions of Men, their Actions are in their own Power in some measure, and imputable to themselves.

2. Let us consider, that which is more evident, that every Man has a natural Desire and Pleasure to applaud and commend himself. That Self-Love, which is natural to all Men, makes every one much pleased to think himself excellent; and to account what he does to be worthy of Praise and Applause. This every Man feels in himself, and therefore it needs no proving.

I proceed then to the

3. Third Thing, which is the Foundation of this Pleasure we are speaking of, and that is this: There is that in the Nature of good Actions, or inseparably belonging to them, which will give the Man that does them, very just and good Ground to applaud and commend himself for doing them. Now if this be made to appear, then every one that considers the Matter, must be convinced that the Ways of Wisdom are Ways of Pleasantness; that, besides the Pleasure there is in the Performance, there is also an exceeding great, and most sensible Pleasure in the reviewing and reflecting upon religious and good Actions. And I shall make it appear, that there is in the Nature of good Actions, and inseparably belonging to them, that which will enable and encourage a Man that does them, upon just and good Reason and Ground, to applaud and commend himself for doing them.

This I shall represent in the Four Particulars following.

1. The Fitness and Reasonableness of all That which Religion enjoyns us to do, will give a Man ground to applaud and commend himself for his religious and good Actions, it is most highly equitable, and just in all the Parts of it; and is most perfectly what the Apostle calls it, *Rom. 12. 1. namely, Reasonable Service.*

vice. There is nothing required of us within the whole compass of our Duty, but what a Man's own Mind and Reason upon serious consideration, must needs be perfectly satisfied in; nothing that he can have any reason to be ashamed of, or to think below him, or unfit for him to do, or that he can justly upbraid, or condemn himself for doing. How reasonable and just are all the Duties of Piety towards God? This will appear upon a fair stating and proposal of them. Is it not highly so, that we reverence and adore an infinitely glorious and excellent Being? That we trust the Original Truth? That we love the Sovereign and the Fountain Good? That we obey the supreme Authority of the World in all that he commands? That we resign and submit our selves entirely to his disposing Providence, who is rightful Owner, and just Disposer of all things? That we praise and acknowledge those glorious Perfections, which are daily exercised to our Comfort and Advantage, and give him Thanks for all the good things that we enjoy, since it is he that freely bestows them? What can be more equitable, and more agreeing to right reason than these things? Again, That the things which are made to be our Duty in our carriage towards Men are all highly reasonable and just, does sufficiently appear, in that these two are the fundamental Rules of that Duty: Namely, That we do to others, as we would they should do unto us; and that we love our Neighbour as our selves. What can be more agreeing to Reason, and more satisfactory to a Man's own Mind, than to give my Neighbour what, in his Circumstances, I my self might desire; or than to love him as my self, who is my fellow-Creature, and in all Points like my self? How reasonable is it for me to shew Mercy, who need Mercy? For me to be ready to do good, and perform all manner of kind Offices to my Neighbour; when I must needs desire that others should be so disposed towards

wards me? How ready should I be to forgive, who must often need forgiveness? How reasonable is it that I should be honest and faithful to others, when I desire them to be so towards me? A little sober Consideration would make it evidently appear, concerning every instance of Duty towards our Neighbour, that it is most highly reasonable and just.

And when a Man apprehends and considers this thing, he will perform his Duty with an entire satisfaction; And it must please him to think, that in what he has done, he has paid a just Debt to Almighty God, he has render'd what was due to him; to think he has acted as becomes his Reason, and so as he must needs be justified by the Wisdom and Consciences of his Neighbours, in his Carriage towards them: He finds in himself what *David* said, *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy Commands*; he sees he has no reason to be ashamed of his Actions, but they are such as he can justify and applaud himself for; and certainly there can be nothing more pleasant to a Man, than the just applauses of himself.

2. The Dignity and Nobleness of good Actions is such as will enable him that does them to applaud himself for doing them, and therefore to reflect upon, review them with Delight and Pleasure. He that lives well, lives up to the highest and most noble capacities of his Nature. In pious and vertuous Actions alone, do we greatly excel the Beasts that perish; not in any sensual Pleasures or Enjoyments. They have Senses as well as we, and as many, and can delight in the Objects of them, and have, perhaps as many delights of that kind as we: But they cannot be pious or wise; they cannot be vertuous or good, because they do not know or chuse their own Actions. In these things the religious Man excels them, and advances himself truly above them, and he only among Men does in any considerable measure excel them.

Farther,

Farther, So far as we become Religious, we are already here on Earth become like the Angels which are in Heaven: He that lives religiously is employed as they are, and conforms himself to them; as our Saviour does plainly intimate, when he bids us pray, that the Will of God may be done on Earth; as it is done in Heaven. The Psalmist says of the Angels, *They perform the Commandments of God, they hearken to the voice of his word*, Psal. 103. 20. The pious Man, then, that carefully performs his Duty towards God, joins himself to that noble Company, he is a *Fellow Citizen of the Saints*, or holy Ones (which may mean the Angels) and of the Household of God; as the Apostle speaks, Eph. 2. 19. *I am thy Fellow-Servant*, said an Angel to St. John, and *Fellow Servant of the Prophets, and of them which keep the Sayings of this Book*, Rev. 22. 9. When we worship and praise God, we join with Angels and Arch-Angels, and all the Company of Heaven. When we pay him a profound Reverence, and come before him with a godly Fear, we do as they who are represented as covering their Faces in their solemn Addresses to him. When we are concern'd and endeavouring to promote his Glory in the World; this is what they constantly endeavour. When we combat the Temptations that assault our selves, and set our selves against the works of the Devil in others, we are on the same side with Michael and his Angels, are join'd and taking part with those bright Hosts against the Devil and his Angels. And this surely, is greatly to our Honour.

And there is a farther Dignity and Excellence in a good and vertuous Life, and that is, It is conformity to the Ever-blessed God himself. And therefore when any are made righteous and holy, they are said to be renewed after his Image and Likeness, Eph. 4. 24. When we best perform our Duties to Men, then we do best imitate, and most resemble the Most excellent and perfect Being. When we are merciful, 'tis as our
Father

Father in Heaven is merciful. When we return good for evil, 'tis to do like him who is good to the Unthankful and the Evil. When we are sincere and true, just and righteous in all our Behaviour; this is to resemble him who is a God of Truth, and without Iniquity. When we patiently bear with the Infirmities of others; this is a noble imitation of his Long-sufferings with us all. When we forgive those that injure us, this is as he does, who is a God forgiving Iniquity, Transgression and Sin: When we set our selves to do all the Offices of Kindness that we can, to be beneficial to Mankind in our several Stations; this a very honourable Imitation of his abundant Goodness. Upon these accounts a good and vertuous Life, is truly great, and honourable, and noble: This puts upon a Man the greatest Worth and Value that he can attain to; this is his best Accomplishment: and as it raises him in the Esteem of God, so it renders him truly deserving the Respect and Esteem of Men, and is that which does best deserve it: Hence it is said, *The Righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour*, Prov. 12. 26.

Now though it were very unreasonable that the Sense of this should make any Man proud and disdainful of his Neighbour, whom he thinks not to be so good as himself, when in all this, he has nothing but what he receiv'd, and it was the free Grace of God that made him to differ; and in becoming Proud, he ceases to be the good Man: Yet a thankful, humble Sense of this a Man may have, and the Thoughts of it may afford him a great deal of Delight and Pleasure. To think the Creator made the human Nature at first, but little lower than the Angels, and crown'd it with Honour and Dignity: All of us indeed fell in our first Parents from that honourable State; and our Nature being defil'd with Sin, we became more vile than the Beasts that perish: But I (Thanks be to Divine Grace) have recovered that State

State again in some measure; I am rising towards the Perfection of that Dignity and Honour as I encrease in Vertue and Piety: I am now one of the Houshold of God, one of the honour'd Train, and Followers of the glorified Jesus. I am reckon'd a Member of that bright and happy Society above, by God and them.

3. Another thing which will give a Man ground to applaud himself for his good Actions, and by consequence inable him to take Pleasure in reflecting upon them, is the Thought or Consideration of having pleas'd God therein. It is a very grateful and comfortable thing to have pleas'd and satisfied our selves in doing well; to have dignified and exalted our selves: But this is still an additional Pleasure, to have pleas'd God too. When a Man can think, in this course which I hold, whoever is displeas'd with me, I please God. I please him whom I have most reason to please, and whom it will be my greatest Advantage to please. I approve my self to the wisest Being; I approve my self to God the Judge of all: And who is he that can condemn whom God justifies? It is a small thing to me to be judg'd of Mens Judgment. He takes Delight in me, and is well-pleas'd with my Actions, who can do whatsoever he will, who can make me as happy as I can desire to be. I am through Jesus Christ, accepted with the most Holy God. And it must be an unspeakable Pleasure to a good Man to think, while I am doing well God beholds me, I am never out of his Eye; he beholds me with Delight and Complacence, he has always a particular and special regard to me. In whatever obscure Corner of the World, and in how mean a Station soever I am, doing well, and keeping the Commands of my God, I am for this, in great Esteem in that upper and glorious World. And I shall not serve God for nought. I cannot please him, but it will redound to my great Advantage. He will reward my Performance of my Duty,

Duty, my Payment even of what I owe him : So bounteous and so good a Master do I serve ! A Man cannot chuse but applaud himself, for having so well consulted his own Interest. A happy Choice this will appear to him, and therefore he must needs approve himself for it. And this will lead his Thoughts to the next particular, which is the last I shall mention.

4. The Consideration of those glorious and joyful Expectations from God, which a good and religious Life will raise and maintain in a Man, will inable him to approve and commend himself for having chosen and followed such a Course of Life. How much Good ! how much Blessedness may be expected from an infinite Goodness and Love, upon the Assurance of having pleased God, and of finding Favour with him ! And then if we consider the vast Bounty of his Promises to them that obey him, how much he has most willingly and freely engaged himself to do for them, and how faithful and true he is in the Performance of what he promises : These Things will allow a good Man to entertain very great and very pleasing Expectations. I dare appeal to any Man, whether it would not highly please and satisfy him to think and be assured that God peculiarly loves him, that he is a Favourite of Heaven ; of an Almighty, most wise and unchangeable Friend ; of him who is able to make those he loves, eternally happy : Must it not please a Man to think, I shall be sure to want no good thing : I shall never be overcome or undone by any Evil ; for *the Lord is my Refuge and Portion in the Land of the Living* ; as the Psalmist speaks of himself, *Psal. 142. 5.* What good Man can read and apply that to himself, which is said for such in *Psal. 91. 11.* without a great deal of Pleasure ? *He shall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy Ways :* To think holy and kind Angels are continually about me, while I give them no Offence by any Sin or Impurity : They attend me in my Business ; they watch me when I sleep ; they are willing to be about me to do all manner

ner of good Offices: To keep off Evil Spirits, and deliver from the Harms they spread in my Way. They are Witnesses of my good Actions, and shall bear a kind and honourable Testimony for me at the great Day of Judgment: They see in secret and shall applaud me openly. These are some of the comfortable Expectations that attend a Religious Life. And yet farther; If a Man considers what great and glorious Things are laid up, or reserved for those that love God and keep His Commands. What the Honours, the Felicities and the Pleasures of the next Life will be to such, and does expect to be a Partaker of These, as a good Man may do, he will in some measure foretaste the future Bliss: The Hopes of Heaven are Anticipations; they are Beams and Dawnings of the Joy and Glory there. The good Man then cannot chuse but rejoyce in Hope, when he thinks, I shall ere long be removed from this wicked and miserable World, to That where only Holiness, and Goodness, and Happiness dwell. I shall go from Envy and Malice, from Reproach and Contempt, to joyful Congratulations and Love, to Applauses and Commendations: I go no faster to the Grave, than I go towards Rest. I shall labour then but for a few Moments longer, and shall rest for ever. As I spend this Life, I earn a better; the sooner this ends, the sooner that will begin. While I deny my own Inclinations now, and serve and please God, while I despise the Pleasures of Sense, and absolutely refuse those of Sin, all which are but for a short Season, I am procuring to my self everlasting Satisfaction and Pleasures. These are Expectations that may attend a good Life, which the faithful Promises of God give a good Man a Right and Claim to. And when a Man considers, this is the Fruit, these are the Advantages which he shall gain by his doing well, he must needs applaud himself for having chosen and followed so wise, and so advantageous a Course; for having done those things from which he may hope to reap so great and unproportionable Gains, from whence he shall de-

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rive so much Honour and Felicity. How evidently and comfortably will it appear to him to have been worth his while to perform the greatest Labours in Religion; to have exercised the severest Self-denials, or to have born the greatest Sufferings, when he considers, that this Course entitles him to endless Rest and Peace, to unmixed Pleasure and full Satisfaction, and the incomparable Glory and Felicity of Heaven.

Thus I have sufficiently proved what the wise Man here says, *The Ways of Wisdom, or Religion, are Ways of Pleasantness.*

It remains now, that something be said briefly, to promote that Use of this Truth, which Men ought to make of it.

I. And in the first Place, it should serve to take Men off in some measure, from the Pleasures of Sense. I mean those Men who are too much addicted to them. It is not the Design of Religion to make us refuse and abstain from all the pleasing Things of this World. We are allowed to take and use soberly and thankfully, whatsoever God shall give us, and we can lawfully obtain of them. But since there is so much Pleasure in doing well, this may reasonably suggest to us these Two Things.

I. That we should not suffer our selves to be wholly taken up with worldly and sensual Pleasure. We should not yield our selves entirely to the Pursuit and Enjoyment of that, and let these Pleasures stand by, neglected. He that governs himself most wisely in this Matter, and has the most pleasant Life of all other, is he that takes care to enjoy both Sorts, as far as he may. And to enforce this Exhortation, we may consider, that without doubt the Pleasures of Religion are the strongest and sweetest of any. They sink deeper into a Man than any other, and affect him more as they enter into his Mind, and put all the inward Powers of that, into a pleasing Exercise and Motion. They possess more of a Man than those that touch only his Body and Senses. The Mind of Man

is the most, and (as we may say) the greatest Part of him: It has most Desire and greatest Capacity of Pleasure. It is much more sensible both of Pleasure and Pain, than the duller Body. The Psalmist speaks the greater Sweetness and Excellency of Religious Pleasure, when he says of the Law of God, *It is sweeter than the Honey and the Honey-comb*, Psal. 19. 10. He means the Practice of Religion and Vertue, the doing any Duties commanded by the Law of God, afforded him a far greater Pleasure and Delight, than e'er he could by his Senses receive from the most pleasant Things of this World.

2. Since there is so much Pleasure in well-doing, this may justly persuade Men off from the guilty Pursuit and Enjoyment of the Pleasures of this World. Why should a Man suffer himself to be guilty for the sake of any Pleasure, when he may enjoy that which is very Rich and Sensible, without being so? It is most certain, that Guilt will greatly allay the briskest Pleasures of this World: *In the midst of guilty Laughter the Heart is sad*. These are always best and sweetest to him that regularly and soberly uses them, that uses them according to the Rules of Religion. Thus he shall hurt neither his Body, nor his Soul, nor his Estate, nor his Neighbour, while he pleases his Appetites, and gratifies his Senses; and so he avoids the unpleasing Farewel of a troubled Conscience. He does not destroy the Appetite while he pleases it, but keeps himself in a Capacity to have always a very lively Relish and Sense of his Pleasures. The irregular and intemperate Man makes a Drudgery of those of this World, and turns their fine Relish eager and sour: And the other Sort, that is, the high and delicate ones of Religion, he utterly deprives himself of. In a vertuous and religious Course of Life, a Man may enjoy both Sorts; but in that which is guilty and irreligious, he cannot well enjoy either. This is the first Use may be made of this Discourse.

II. A Second is this ; It ought to persuade Men to betake themselves steadily to a religious and good Course of Life. It was said by the Spirit of God, That the Ways of Religion are Ways of Pleasantness, with design to recommend them to the Sons of Men. He spoke this in a kind Condescension to our Nature and Inclination ; to make a Bait of Pleasure, which we are so apt to dote upon. And this surely should be a very powerful Argument to this purpose: This ought much rather to induce Men to be wise and vertuous, to act as becomes them, and pursue their true Happiness, than to make them guilty of Folly and Sin ; of what is shameful and hurtful to them, and of what will incur their everlasting Misery. And how great an Obligation to Obedience is it, that the Laws of our Religion are thus contriv'd ; that the Universal Sovereign has made the Instances of our Duty, so reasonable and so good, that we may delight in our Duty, and the Performance of it will reward it self. It would exceedingly aggravate our Wickedness, and shew a strange Obstinacy in Sin, and Enmity to God, if we should rather refuse all this Happiness and Pleasure, than submit our selves to the Laws of Religion.

And thus I have far enough urged this Argument in our Text, to shew that they who will do wickedly, do obstinately refuse their own Interest. And to furnish the Consciences of Sinners with such a Conviction, as will at one time or other prove a sharp Sting and Torment, if they will not suffer it now to restrain them from Wickedness. *Now to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost be all Honour and Glory World without end. Amen.*

THE PRAYER.

Most Great and Glorious Lord God! the Infinite and Perfect Being. The greatest Excellency among thy Creatures lies in their greatest Likeness and Conformity to Thee. We give Thee Thanks, O Lord, for that thou hast made us capable of so great Honour, as the resembling of Thee in our Actions; for that thou hast laid upon us such Laws, as guide us to a noble Conformity to the Divine Nature. Thou didst of thy bounteous Goodness make Man upright, inclin'd to such Actions and suited to thy excellent Law: But alas! we have defiled and polluted our selves with Sin, and are become averse and unwilling, impotent and unable to keep thy Commandments: Our carnal Minds are Enmity to Thee, and are not subject to thy Law, nor can be, till they be Renewed, Sanctified, and Created again in Christ Jesus unto Good Works. O Lord, open Thou our Eyes to behold the wondrous and alluring Excellencies of thy Law: Work in us to will and to do, according to thy good Pleasure: Rectify the Apprehensions, the Relish of our Souls, that we may find thy Commandments to be sweeter than the Honey and the Honeycomb. Lord make us so steady and diligent in our Duty, so practised and inured to it, and so in love with it, that we may find thy ways to be to us, as they are in themselves, ways of Pleasantness. Shew and convince us of the Equity and Reasonableness of all thy Service, that it is perfect Freedom, that it is our greatest Honour, that the Wisdom of good Living, is our best Ornament; even as a Chain of Gold about the Neck: Encourage us we beseech Thee to our Duty, with a constant Sense of thy Presence with us, of thy gracious Eye and Regard to all we do: Let us know thou dost accept our sincere Endeavours and imperfect Performances, through the Merits and Meditation of Jesus Christ. Inable us to hope in thy

thy Mercy, and assure us that if we put our Trust in Thee in Well-doing we shall not be confounded. But especially we pray Thee, O Lord, shed abroad thy Love abundantly in our Hearts: Let Love possess us, Love move, Love direct and byass us; make us to love Thee with all our Hearts, and our Neighbours as our selves; so shall we be reconcil'd to thy Commandments; so shall we run and not be weary; we shall ever walk before Thee, and not faint in that blessed way. Renew us, O Lord, after thine Image, and make us Holy as thou art Holy, and good as thou art Good, Merciful as thou our Heavenly Father art Merciful, and Forgiving as thou art ready to Forgive: Let our Lives and Conversations shew forth the Vertues of him that has called us to his Kingdom and Glory.

Look down in Mercy upon all Mankind, rescue the miserable Slaves of the Devil, (who is the Ruler of the Darknes of this World,) from their sad Bondage under him; and bring them into the happy Liberty of the Children of God. Save thy People, O Lord, and bless thine Heritage; govern them and lift them up for ever: And make all that name the Name of Christ, duly concern'd to adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Let thy gracious Presence dwell in the Land of our Nativity; bless us with Peace and Plenty, with the Means of Grace, and the Efficacy of them to enlighten our Minds, to cleanse our Hearts, to heal our Divisions, to teach us all, from the Highest to the lowest, our several Duties towards Thee. Give Health and Happiness to our Queen, and teach us, and all her Subjects, our Duty towards her. Bless and direct all inferiour Magistrates, make them a Terror to evil Doers, and a Praise to them that do well. Let those that minister in Holy things, be a good Example to the Flock, and make us Followers of them as they are of Christ. We Implore thy Mercy upon all that are in Affliction, especially upon those who are persecuted for Righteousness Sake; give them Patience under their Sufferings, and a happy Issue out of all their Afflictions. Accept our humble Sacrifices of Praise and Thanksgiving, which we have this day offer'd to Thee in thy Son's Name: And make the Word which we have heard, to have such Influence upon our Hearts, and to bring forth such Fruit in our Lives, as thou dost expect from it. Give us a Night
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of safe and comfortable Rest, preserving us from Fear and Danger. And when we awake in the Morning, let us chearfully return to our Duty, in all our ways acknowledge Thee; and do thou graciously direct our Steps for the Sake of Jesus Christ. In whose Words we conclude these our poor imperfect Addresses.

OUR Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. Amen.

THE

Easiness of Religion,

Explained and Improved.

Let us Pray:

Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mat. 11. 29, 30.

Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me,
for I am meek and lowly in Heart, and
ye shall find Rest to your Souls.

For my Yoke is easie, and my Burthen is
light.

IT is wonderful Degeneracy that the Humane Nature is fallen under, as appears from the great Averseness that is in all Mankind to a religious and a vertuous Life. Religion is the greatest Ornament and Glory of the Humane Nature: It is the Cure of all
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our Defects and Disparagements: It is our true and compleat Perfection: And yet we commonly appear to be most easily withheld from the Practice of it: We devise Excuses to neglect it, we receive the most false and unreasonable Prejudices against it without any Examination of them: We do often obstinately persist in Wickedness against the most weighty Inducements to do well.

These Words of the Blessed Jesus, who *came into World to save Sinners*, and to that Purpose has taught us as well as died for us, do meet with one of the Prejudices against an Holy Life, which he knew to be very common in the Hearts of Men: And that is, the Imagination that Religion is a Task too hard for Humane Nature, and utterly impossible to be perform'd. Because we must indeed take some Pains to be Religious, our lazy and unwilling Souls magnify the little Oppositions into Mountains of Difficulties, and make us think we shall never be able to get over them; and the way down to the bottomless Pit, seems easie and smooth, is strow'd with Pleasures, Riches and Worldly Honours; and these things easily allure and engage us to follow that. Against this fatal and discouraging Prejudice, our Saviour says in the Words of our Text;

Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: And ye shall find rest unto your Souls.

For my Yoke is easie, and my Burthen is light.

Take my Yoke upon you: That is, charge your selves with the keeping my Commands; submit to my Government: For this Meaning the word Yoke is wont to have in Scripture. *For my Yoke is easie, and my Burthen is light.* It shall be possible to you to keep my Commands; you shall find I do not require of you, that which you cannot perform; that the Difficulties you may meet with are not invincible. And farther to encourage the taking up his Yoke, he

adds, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.* If ye take up this Yoke, ye but take up that which I have born my self: I am of a meek and submissive mind; I do not disdain to be subject to the Laws of Religion. I then command you nothing but what I have practised; and your Obedience to these Laws will be your Imitation of me: And he adds farther, *Ye shall find rest to your Souls:* This shall be Peace and Happiness to you.

In discoursing upon these Words, I think it may be useful for the better promoting the Design of them, to insist upon these Three Heads.

1. To shew in what Sense it may be said that the Commands of God are easie to be observ'd: Which will be both Explication and Proof of our Saviour's Words.

2. To suggest by what means we may best render this easie to our selves.

3. To urge by some proper Motives, the Use of those Means.

In the First place, I shall shew you in what Sense we may understand this, that 'tis easie to keep the Commands of God: And this will be sufficiently represented in the Three following Particulars.

1. This is easie to a vigorous and earnest Endeavour. 'Tis true, there will be continual Opposition made against it, by that Corruption that has gotten Possession in our Souls, and by the frequent Assaults of Temptation from the World and the Devil: But yet these are Difficulties that should be overcome by an earnest and diligent Endeavour. Our Saviour says, *Strive to enter in at the strait Gate, for many I say unto you shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able,* Luke 13. 24. By the strait Gate he means the way of Religion, which the Opposition of our Spiritual Enemies and our own unworthy Averseness, do render a strait Gate: This we cannot pass *without* Striving, and a good Endeavour; but *with* this he intimates we

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may do so: This will accomplish what we desire, but many *seek* to enter in, and shall not be able. To lazy Wishes 'tis exceeding difficult, indeed invincibly difficult to be Religious: He that cannot persuade himself to *strive* with Earnestness and Patience, shall never become so. And this is the reason why it remains with many, so discouraging a Difficulty all their days; they never proceed farther than to a few lazy Wishes; or at most, to a few short and faint Endeavours. They are good sometimes when they meet with no Temptation or Provocation to be otherwise; But whenever these Assault, they presently yield and renew their Sins.

2. It is easie to keep the Commands of God, with that Assistance which the Grace of God affords them who diligently seek it. 'Tis good and safe for a Man to despair of succeeding by his own Strength and Endeavour alone; but it is also foolish and absur'd, to conclude from our own Weakness, the utter Impossibility of keeping the Commands of God; because we may obtain sufficient Assistance from above. He that hath said his Yoke is easie, hath, as we may say, therein bound himself to make good his own gracious Word; and we need not doubt but he will do this. Our great and kind Saviour we may be assur'd, is ready and able to help us in all our Difficulty and Weakness. *We have not an High-Priest* (says the Apostle of him) *that cannot be touched with a feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin.* Heb. 4. 15. And from thence he adds in the 16th Ver. of that Chapter, *Let us therefore come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy and find Grace, to help in time of need:* Since we have such an High-Priest, such an Advocate in Heaven, we are not to doubt, but upon earnest and sincere seeking, we shall obtain sufficient Grace: We may come boldly for this; may ask with an assured Expectation to receive. Accordingly St. James tells us,

us, *If any Man lack Wisdom, he may ask it of God, who gives to all Men liberally and upbraids not, Jam. 1. 5.* But let us also know, since we are bid strive to enter in at the strait Gate, that we must not expect the Grace of God will inable us to enter in without our Striving. As the Grace of God must make our Striving successful, so our Striving is necessary to the obtaining the effectual Grace of God. Let us take Notice to this purpose, of what God says by his Prophet concerning the People of *Israel*, in *Ezek. 11.* In the 18th Verse of that Chapter he mentions their earnest Application of themselves towards the making a Reformation among them; and then in Ver. 19. and 20. he says, *I will give them one Heart, and I will put a new Spirit within you, and I will take away the stony Heart out of their Flesh, and will give them an Heart of Flesh: That they may walk in my Statutes, and keep my Commandments and do them.* If then we apply our selves in great earnest to be Religious, the Spirit of God will put this new Spirit into us, and we shall be renewed in the inner Man, as the Scripture speaks; and then it will be easie to us to keep the Commands of God. And the Grace of God restores our decayed Powers, and rectifies our Nature, and makes us suitable to the Divine Law. When this is wrought in us, so far as it prevails, it will be as agreeable to perform good Actions, as it is for the Sun to shine and the Waters to flow. These will be as agreeable and easie, as Natural Actions to a Man that is in a State of Health and Strength. Thus if our depraved Natures were but rectified, we should find it easie to perform the Commands of God. And this shews that they are easie in themselves. To him that is born of God and does truly love him, *his Commandments are not grievous*; as the Apostle plainly intimates, in the first Epistle of *John* and the 5th Chapter by the Connexion of the 3d Verse there. Those then who apply themselves seriously to the Performance of their Duty, and wait for the good Motions of the Spirit of Grace, and carefully

fully obey them when they are offered, they will find the Spirit of God ready to assist them; and after he has wrought in them to will, he will enable them to do: It is according to his good Pleasure to do so. And it may be also concluded and expected from what he has declared concerning himself, That *he does not delight in the death of a Sinner, but had rather that he should turn to him and live.*

3. Religion is easie in comparison to Vice and Wickedness; or is truly much more easie than that. It is indeed more suitable to the Frame and Constitution of our Nature than Wickedness is. Vertue however seldom it can be found, and tho' it be accounted difficult, is for all that agreeing and suitable to the Essential Constitution of Humane Nature; and Wickedness, however common and familiar it is, is an adventitious and adverse Thing. The former is that we were made for, and suited and fitted to the Practice of it, and then the latter must by Consequence be contrary to the Frame and Contrivance of our Nature. Religion is the Rectitude of our Nature, Wickedness is the Disorder of it; Vice is an Aberration from Nature and the Deformity and Corruption of it. All the Motions of vehement Passions and unlawful Lusts, are Departures from true and right Nature: But from hence it must needs be, that Wickedness is the most difficult and troublesome of the two. What is most Natural must needs be most easie; and Vertue is in truth most Natural. Accordingly, how does a violent and furious Passion disorder the Mind, confound our Thoughts, and dissipate and spend the Spirits! Is not an excessive and inordinate Motion of the Mind, more troublesome than a calm and gentle one? And is it not easier and sooner done, to use with Moderation and Temperance, the Pleasures of Sense, than to use them with Excess? the one soothes and cherishes Nature, the other weakens, frets and hurts it. Besides, may we not observe that Vice must be learnt? that no Man can arrive at a great Degree of Wickedness without taking
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some Pains with himself for this? Farther, it is most certain that any one reigning Sin is usually tyrannous, and requires more to gratifie and serve it, than were necessary to answer all the Obligations of Religion. How many Vices cost Men a great deal more than all the necessary Expences and Exercises of Charity that Religion requires would come to? Do we not often see Covetousness spending the Body with Labour, racking the Mind with Care, robbing Men of their necessary Rest, and withholding them from the due Enjoyment of what they have, much more than ever Religion does require these Things? The Laws of Religion are ordinarily satisfied without hazarding or impairing our Health or Estate, or Strength, but the Demands of inordinate Lusts often require these Things of those that obey such. There are a thousand times more Martyrs to Sin and Wickedness in the World at all times, than ever there were to Religion under the most cruel Persecutions. The Servants of Sin have the distracting Slavery of many Masters, and the Commands of these are always very peremptory, and oftentimes contrary to each other. And in that Case, while they gratifie one Lust, they do with a great deal of Self-denial, put off the Demands of another. There is usually much more Self-denial practised in the Service of any one darling Sin, than all the Laws of Religion would require together. We cannot look into the World without very often observing this, That if People would but take as much Pains to be Religious as they do to accomplish worldly Designs, there would be many more good Men, and more saved than are likely to be. Thus Men submit to labour in other Matters, while they refuse to do it in Religion: And they cannot give up themselves to any Vice but it grows commonly so exorbitant, as to require more Pains and Labour than it would cost us to do well. And thus much may suffice to be spoken to the first Head; to shew in what Sense Religion may be understood to be easie. The next

next to be insisted on is this, To shew by what means we may best render it so *to us*, and lessen as much as may be, the Difficulty that accidentally attends the Practice of it. I will suppose there is no need to urge the diligent using of the common appointed means of Grace, such as Prayer, hearing the Word, and the Sacraments: It must be very evident to any one, that we must not expect to become good and religious, whilst we neglect these: But I will insist upon some Advices less Obvious.

1. We must take care to be well and fully resolved to keep the Commands of God. He who has only some faint Wishes and feeble Purposes to do, this: He who halts as it were between Two Opinions, and cannot yet determine which to adhere to: That is, one while purposing to be Religious, and ever and anon returning to his Sins; such a Man will have it always difficult to do well, and will never be able to overcome the Difficulty of it. There is nothing does more magnifie the Difficulty of Religion, than an un-resolved Will: But a good Resolution encreases our Strength against it. We see in all Matters, if a Man be fully resolved, no Difficulty is able to discourage him; Desire and Resolution, will make him strive till he has overcome. To possess our selves then with a good Resolution, we should well consider the absolute Necessity of a Religious Life; that this is necessary to our Tranquillity and Happiness in this Life, and also in Life to come; that we must be Religious to save our Souls from the Everlasting Torments of Hell. A deep Sense of Necessity will give us greater Strength and Power against all Opposition, according to what the Philosopher said long ago, *Διωαμεις γδ ἀνάγκης ἐγυυθι νοιδ* (Pythag.) *Necessity and Power dwell near together.* A Sense of Necessity gives a firm and vigorous resolution, and that gives strength to perform. If we apprehend the absolute Necessity of our being Religious, in order to the Salvation of our Souls,
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this will rouse us to such an Endeavour and Resolution, as no Difficulty will be able to withstand.

2. As we must be thoroughly resolved, so we should begin, as soon as we can to be Religious, that we may make it as easie as we can. This is a thing of great Importance to this Purpose. We take all Impressions easiest in our younger Years. Vices are then like tender Plants easily rooted up and destroyed: And Vertues, by an early Practice of them may grow up with us, and be rooted betimes, and by being inured a long while to them, they will be very familiar and easie. If we do not mind this, to begin betimes to be religious, our evil Inclinations will grow up into habits, and we shall be accustomed to do Evil; and this is to encrease the Difficulty of Religion up to the highest degree; as the Prophet intimates plainly in that Question, *Jer. 13. 23. Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye also do well that are accustomed to do evil.* This mischief Men do themselves by delaying to be religious: they make it much more difficult to be so than otherwise it would be.

3. As we should begin betimes, so we must endeavour to be very steadfast and diligent in Well-doing, to make it easie to us. We must not often interrupt and break off our course of doing good; this will make us suffer, as often as we take it up again, the difficulties of *beginning* to be Religious, we shall be always but *beginning*. The steady and diligent repetition of the same Acts begets an Habit, and makes those Actions at length familiar and easie: And there is nothing in a good Life, but in this way will become so to us: Customary and constant Practice will overcome the greatest difficulties of this, as well as of any other course. It was therefore excellent Advice which the Philosopher (*Pithag.*) gave his Scholars when he said, *Chuse you the best course of Life, and custom will render it the pleasantest.* The more we exercise
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our selves in well-doing then, the more easie it will be to us. If we are unsteady, we shall be always weak, if constant, we shall encrease in Strength, as is said, *Job. 17. 9. The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean Hands, shall grow stronger and stronger.* Spiritual Strength encreases as the Natural does, by diligent Exercise? and as that encreases, our Duty must needs become the more easie to us.

4. *Lastly*, To this Purpose we must carefully avoid the Temptations to any Sin. There can be nothing more absurd than for a Man to be careless in this matter, and yet to complain of the difficulty of Religion. He complains of the difficulty, and yet by his own Folly encreases it. He that seeks and entertains himself with the Temptations to Sin, can never easily abstain from it, or live a vertuous and good Life. These when they are neatest, have greatest force, and are weakned as we keep them at a distance: And our Inclination to Evil will always be strongest when 'tis excited by Temptation, and favoured with Opportunity to exert its self: Temptation and Opportunity are to our Evil Inclinations like Oyl to a Fire, which pour'd on it, will encrease its Strength and Fury. As we put out Fire by with-drawing the Fuel, so we must extinguish and weaken the Fire of Concupiscence by avoiding Temptation; those Circumstances which we have found are apt to draw us into Sin, we must carefully shun them if we can.

These are the Endeavours which must be opposed to the difficulties of Religion, and the means whereby we may render it very easie to our selves. If Men will but diligently take this Care, they shall not fail to find it true, which our Saviour says, *My Yoke is easie, and my Burthen is light.*

Now because our Saviour himself adds some Motives to the taking up his Yoke, besides this assurance of its easiness, I shall proceed in the last place to urge this

this too; That if we do not find it so easie at our first Attempts, as we would desire, we may yet not be discouraged, but persist in our endeavour, and constantly take this course which has been directed to diminish the difficulty we meet with. To which Purpose, let these following things be considered; which things will also help to settle and confirm us in good Resolutions, and so will promote the easiness of Religion.

1. All the Difficulty of Obedience will be no excuse for our neglecting it; This will not excuse us in the Sight of God, tho' he be very merciful and forgiving: For certainly, this does not disanul our Obligations to it. As we are bound to obey, we are bound also to endeavour and strive to obey; and the rather, because upon our good endeavour and striving, we shall be inabled to do it. Those difficulties which we might overcome cannot excuse, if they do discourage us; and it is very unreasonable that such should discourage us. We have no Fortitude in us, no due Sense of God's obliging Goodness, of his terrible Wrath, of the excellency and Honour of Religion, if such Difficulties can discourage us. We trample upon all the Inducements to Obedience, and *are not* good, only because we *will not* be so.

But farther; This difficulty arises from our selves, from the guilty Corruption of our own Natures; *The Law is Spiritual, and we are carnal*; that is *Holy, Just and Good*, we are unholy and sold under Sin; and hence is it difficult to us to obey the Laws of God; hence we are unable: So that we have contracted our own Inability, and therefore we must not think that this will excuse us. As well may a Man think his prodigal wasting of his Estate, should make what he owes not due to his Creditors, as that this should excuse our keeping the Commands of God.

2. Let us consider, that we have the Example of our Saviour, to quicken and encourage us to our Duty.

Duty. 'Tis true, he had not that inward hinderance of it, which we are unhappily encumbred with; but yet even He was not free from many external Discouragements and Temptations. He suffered many Indignities and Persecutions from Men; he died for the Testimony that he bore to the Truth; And was obedient unto Death, even the Ignominious and Miserable Death of the Cross. Nothing could divert him from doing his Father's Will, and fulfilling the Work that he came into the World about. And it greatly recommends the Yoke, which he calls us to take up, that it is the same that he has born himself. He bids us learn of him in the Text; to learn Submission and Obedience by his Example. He spent his whole Life in a willing Obedience to the Commands of God. He condescended to make himself subject to the Law of God. And let us consider, it was for our sakes that he became so; to fulfil the Law on our Behalf, and satisfy the demands of it, which we cannot fully satisfy; and so to purchase for us, the glorious reward of Perfect Obedience. 'Tis he who has thus oblig'd us, who calls us to take his Yoke upon us. And shall we refuse to take a little Pains to please him who denied himself so much, and condescended so far for our Advantage? We see that he expects this of us, he requires us to learn of him, and follow him in Obedience: And can we think he will ever own us if we do it not? Can we imagin that this is not then a necessary Condition of finding Favour with him, of obtaining his Intercession for us, and of his owning us at the great Day of Judgment?

3. Let us, then, set the Inconveniencies that Men are expos'd to in a course of Wickedness, against the Difficulties of Religion, and consider which of the two is most fit to be chosen: Whether those Difficulties which may be overcome, or the Inconveniencies that cannot be avoided, and are intolerable. Certainly, these latter things are not enough considered, when

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Men forsake their Duty, because of the little Labour and Self-denial, that it would put them to. Let me then briefly propose to you some few things to be farther thought on at your Leisure.

1. Consider the grievous and heavy Calamities in this Life, which the Sins of Men always expose them to, and often bring them under. *Evil pursueth Sinners*, 'tis said; and how often do we see that it overtakes them too, with a very sudden and terrible Vengeance? The Judgment and Wrath of God often mixes with the Sinner's pleasant and profitable Sins, and does utterly spoil and imbitter them. Idleness, Drunkenness, and Uncleaness, bring a Man often to Rags and Poverty. Diseases painful, loathsome and mortal are the frequent, troublesome effects of Intemperance, and lawless Lusts. Tho' the World be very lamentably wicked, yet are some Sins matter of Ignominy and Shame in the sight of the World. And Men have made Penal Laws against some sorts of Wickedness; and he who will take no pains to restrain and regulate himself, is often left by the Spirit of God to fall into those Sins, which subject him to the Ignominy, and Loss, and Pain of those Penalties. The Afflictions of this Life are very grievous and uneasie to whoever falls under them, and he that constantly provokes Almighty God must needs be most exposed to them: And these are most heavy and sensible to the wretched Sinner, whose Heart is set on the things of this World, and who wants those inward Consolations that are wont to support good Men under their Afflictions. Sin in its Nature tends to Misery. Is it not our Wisdom then to take a little pains to avoid Sin, rather than to expose our selves for want of that pains, to a great deal of Misery; To the suffering of much affliction, and that too, from the Wrath and incensed Justice of God, which will give, whatever we can endure, the greatest Sharpness and Aggravation that it can possibly have?

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2. The Sinner is liable to the Anguish and Pangs of a guilty Conscience ; which are far worse Things than any outward Afflictions, and certainly much more intolerable than all the Labours or Self-denials of Religion. Guilt when a Man is sensible of it, is a very heavy, and uneasy Burthen : *Solomon* very justly says, *A wounded Spirit, who can bear ?* When a Man's Conscience tells him, he has play'd the Fool, he has deserved the Hatred of God, and the Contempt of Man ; he has needlessly, and madly hurt his own Body, impaired his Estate, and blasted his Reputation ; he has made the Almighty God, and the Supreme Disposer, his just Enemy ; that he has forfeited his Life, and all that he enjoys and delights in, to Divine Justice ; that Vengeance hovers continually over his Head, that he may justly fear every black Cloud to be charged with it ; that *Evil* haunts and *pursues him* every where ; that he is always, as it were on the Brink of the Bottomless Pit ; that he hangs over the everlasting Flames, but by the slender and weak Thread of this mortal Life : These Thoughts will imbitter his strongest Pleasures, and spoil the Comfort and Joy of the greatest Prosperity. And these Terrors he is exposed to continually, who will not live well. We must often feel these, or take Pains to be Religious. It costs the foolish Sinner a great deal of Labour and Endeavour to divert these Thoughts, when with less Labour he might prevent the Sins that occasion them ; and notwithstanding all his Endeavour they will have their Times to invade and afflict him.

3. Without taking Pains to be Religious, the Sinner must endure the Everlasting Torments of Hell. But is it not apparently wiser to chuse the taking Pains to be Religious, than to bear those Torments ? The Difficulty of Religion will abate and grow less, but those Torments will never abate. He that thinks the Rules of Religion such an ungrateful Confinement, will certainly account that Eternal Prison a worse, if ever he comes there. He that will not deny himself at all

now for the conveniency of serving God, and for the doing of his Duty, shall be denied all Comfort and Satisfaction there for ever. He that will not mortifie his Sins, must die himself for them a miserable and eternal Death: And must needs bring himself at last to that; for there is no Middle Way between the Broad and the Narrow One; nor a Middle State, at the end, between Happiness and Misery. And is it not easie now to determine between these Two Things, where to fix our Choice; whether we will endure the short Labours of Religion, or be condemned to dwell with everlasting Burnings? This is a third Argument.

4. Lastly, Our Saviour in the Text affords us another, with which I shall conclude; and that is, *We shall find Rest to our Souls*: This shall be the *blissful* Reward of our taking up the Yoke of Christ. This Labour in Religion brings to Rest, when that in Sin brings to Torment and Trouble. The first and present Fruit and Reward of it, is Rest and Peace within; a happy Freedom from tormenting Passions, from craving and unruly Lusts and unquiet Appetites: Freedom from the Fears of Death and Damnation. And then Religion has the Hopes of Rest to come; for there *remains a Rest for the People of God*: A Rest even from the present Labours of Religion. We shall have an eternal Rest for a few Moments Labour and Striving: *He that endures to the end of a short Life, the same shall be saved: To him that overcomes* (says our Saviour) *will I give to sit with me in my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am sate down with my Father in his Throne*, Rev. 3. 21. Here is a Promise of Safety, Honour and Rest for ever; of a glorious, honourable and happy Rest. Thus if we will but be *so wise* as to *endeavour* the avoiding everlasting Misery, we shall be rewarded with everlasting Happiness. Which Wisdom let us ask of *the Father of Lights, and Giver of every good Gift*; *to whom be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever*.

THE
PRAYER.

Most Great and most Glorious God, excellent in Thy Nature; and wonderful in Thy Works; in Wisdom hast Thou made them all. Every Creature was perfect in its kind, and fit for all the Uses and Operations that would become it, and that Thou didst intend it for. And Thou, O Lord, madest Man a Rational Creature with an Immortal Spirit in him: As he was therein fitted for great and noble Actions, so Thou didst intend him for Actions suitable to the Dignity of such a Nature; Thou didst intend him to know and adore Thee, to love and Praise Thee; to do Good, to practice Justice, to exercise Faithfulness and Truth, to make a Spiritual and Religious Use of the Things of this World, and to do Thy Will on Earth, as the blessed Angels do it in Heaven. Oh Lord, with great Grief and Shame we look back upon our Original Excellency, when alas, we have wretchedly lost it; Oh how unfit are we now! how unable to do any Thing that is Good! We cannot so much as think a good Thought, or speak a good Word, or perform a good Action! We cannot do what we were made for! We cannot answer our honourable End, but do degrade and debase our selves, by living far below it. And That is become now difficult to us, and unpleasant, which before was easie and pleasant: It was originally natural to us to be vertuous and pious; it was as Meat and Drink to be doing our Father's Will; but now our disordered Faculties naturally do ill: We must endeavour to do Good, and cannot without Thy Grace attain to it. This Grace, therefore, O Lord, we humbly seek; we earnestly implore in the Name of Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee for the Leave we have to seek, for the Hopes to attain it. As a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth those that seek Him: And if earthly Parents know how to give good Gifts to their Children, much

rather do we believe that Thou our heavenly Father wilt give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. O grant us the constant Influence and Assistance of Thy good Spirit. Let us never yield to any Difficulty of performing our Duty, but earnestly strive to enter in at the strait Gate. Quicken our Endeavours with the Hopes of Assistance; strengthen them with the Expectation of a glorious Reward, and continue them to persevere to the End, by the Assurance that we shall hereafter be Partakers of everlasting Rest. We humbly thank Thee, O Lord, for the Liberty of approaching Thy Sanctuary, and of using Thy Ordinances; do Thou, we pray Thee, give them a mighty Efficacy and Power upon us: While we thus wait on the Lord, let us renew our Strength, and with fresh Vigour, run the Way of Thy Commandments. We commit our selves to Thy gracious Protection this Night; make, we pray Thee, our Rest comfortable to us, by a Sense of Thy Favour and Forgiveness. Raise us up again the next Morning, if it please Thee, from our Beds, those Emblems of the Grave. And make us in whatever our Hand finds to do, do it with our Might, because there is no Work, nor Labour, nor Wisdom, nor Knowledge in the Grave, whither we are going.

We recommend to Thy Infinite Mercies, O Lord, all Estates and Conditions of Men. O God, who declarest Thy Almighty Power most chiefly in shewing Mercy and Pity, Mercifully grant to all Men, such a Measure of Thy Grace, that they running the Way of Thy Commandments, may obtain Thy gracious Promises. We beseech Thee to keep Thy Household the Church, in continual Godliness, and that thro' Thy Protection it may be defended from all Adversities, and devoutly given to serve Thee, in all good Works, to the Glory of Thy Great Name. We pray Thee, let Thy Favour and Mercy rest upon these Nations wherein we live: Forgive us, O Lord, our manifold Transgressions; give us Peace, and establish Truth to continue among us, so long as the Sun and Moon shall endure. Bless our Gracious Queen, with all the Blessings of this Life, and a better. Prosper Her Government over us, to Her own Comfort and Happiness, and to ours. Teach us all who are under Her in our several Stations, to do our Duties towards Thee and Her, and towards one another, to Thy Glory, and to the common Peace and Welfare. Bless all our Friends and Relations: Comfort all that are afflicted; relieve

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relieve the oppressed ; help them to Right that suffer Wrong. These Things, O Lord, and whatever else, for our Ignorance we cannot, or for our Unworthiness we dare not ask ; we humbly beseech Thee to grant, thro' the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ the Righteous ; in whose Words we conclude our Prayers, saying,

OUR Father, which art in Heaven ; Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this Day our daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into Temptation : But deliver us from Evil, Amen.

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Let us pray :

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our Doings with thy most gracious Favour, and further us with thy continual Help, that in all our Works begun, continued and ended in Thee, we may glorifie Thy Holy Name, and finally by Thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prov. 22. 8.

He that soweth Iniquity shall reap Vanity.

THough the Holy Scripture has told us of our Adversary the Devil, That he is a Liar from the beginning, and the sad Experience of Mankind has found him so, yet has he the Art to impose upon us still, and we are so foolish as to credit his Suggestions;
By

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By the very same Cheat and Delusion with which he drew our first Mother into Sin, does he draw and persuade her foolish Posterity also to the Commission of it. He made her believe it would be of great Advantage to eat the forbidden Fruit, that this would mightily improve their Condition, and make them more excellent and more happy : *God doth know, (said he) that in the Day ye eat thereof, your Eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil.* Thus did the Serpent beguile her ; *She took of the Fruit and did eat, and gave it to her Husband* and tempted him to eat too : But this, instead of advancing their Condition, sadly impair'd it ; immediately were these our Parents driven out of Paradise, they became subject to Sorrow, and Misery, and Shame, and Death ; and were despoil'd of their greatest Glory, the Image of God in their Souls ; thus instead of becoming more excellent and happy, they rendred themselves and all their Posterity exceeding miserable and vile.

But hereby has our Adversary learnt what sort of Suggestion is very apt to prevail with Mankind ; he has found we are ready to receive and follow that which seems kind to us ; we love to be flattered in our Inclinations, and to have those Things said to us which may persuade us to allow and gratifie them ; and we listen to that which promises great Advantages. Therefore he tells Men they need not fear to be wicked, there is not so much ill in it as some Men out of design would persuade them : He tells them it is the only chearful and pleasant Course of Life to follow their Inclinations ; that 'tis the only profitable and advantageous Course, and the Way to do themselves most good, to conform to the common Sins, to run with the Multitude to do Evil ; to follow the same ill Ways that some are seen to raise their Fortunes by : He tells us, and we too commonly believe him, that in breaking the Commands of God, there is great Reward.

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To antidote and fortify our selves against this delusive Suggestion of the Father of Lies, let us observe what the Spirit of Truth tells us in the Text, and fix our Thoughts a while upon it at present, that we may hereafter remember it to our Advantage. He says, *He that soweth Iniquity shall reap Vanity.* He that *soweth Iniquity*, that is, He that lives an ungodly and unrighteous Course of Life; he that does any Thing that is ill: *He shall reap Vanity*; that is, He shall be wofully disappointed in his Expectations of receiving any considerable or real Advantage thereby. That is said to be *Vain* in Scripture, which does not reach the Purpose it was intended for; which disappoints and frustrates the Hopes and Expectations that are built upon it: So those Oblations are called *Vain* which were not accepted with God: And the Idols of the Heathens, which bore an Appearance of what they were not in Reality and Truth, and were not able to help those that trusted in them, are for this Reason call'd there *Vanities*. This then is the import and meaning of these Words spoken by Solomon: A Course of Wickedness is very false and deceitful; it promises Men much perhaps, but performs little; and he who expects any real Advantage, any true Content and Happiness in such a Course, shall be miserably disappointed.

I think it not unnecessary to insist upon the Proof of this Truth, for 'tis what the World are not easily convinced of. Though we may see it verified in the Experiences of other Men very often, yet we will not impute their ill Successes and Unhappiness to the Deserts and Nature of the Course they chuse, but we impute them rather to some Indiscretion and Folly of those Men in the Management of themselves which we purpose to avoid, and so we hope to reap those Advantages from the same Course of Life, which we see others cannot. Yea, farther, it is very common that Men are not convinced of this Truth,

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though their own Experience might inform them: Though they have found an Emptiness and Vanity in a wicked and careless Life so far as they have tried it, yet they will be so foolish as to hope still for what they can never obtain; they will think there is some Content and Satisfaction beyond them, and on they go in this wrong Way to pursue it. He that finds not this in one sort and train of Vices, will hope to find it in another: He that sees the Emptiness and Vanity of Voluptuousness and Pleasure, will after that think there is great Reward in Covetousness and Ambition, great Happiness in the Riches and Honours which he thinks to gain by them; and thus the Delusion continues with many Men to the end of their Days, and to their final and eternal Vexation and Disappointment. I shall therefore industriously prove this Truth; and then add some Application of it.

And we may be fully convinced of this, That *He that soweth Iniquity shall reap Vanity*, if we will consider well the following Particulars.

I. The Sinner does not always gain the Things he pursues by his guilty Endeavours. An over-ruling Providence governs all Things, and brings to pass whatsoever the Universal and Sovereign Disposer pleases: And this Providence often blasts the Endeavours of wicked Men. The lawless Voluptuary cannot always catch the guilty Pleasures he pursues: Every covetous Man cannot be rich, nor does Ambition certainly rise to the Honour, and Authority, and Respect it aspires to. We may often see Men giving themselves up to worldly Pursuits, and neglecting every Thing else, and yet that they can with all this Application and Endeavour, gain but very little of this World: We may often see, that the very Ways they take to accomplish their Desires, as seeming to them the most likely to do so, do tend to frustrate them. The wise Man expresses this in the Instance of Covetousness, *Prov. 11. 24. There is that scattereth, and yet*

yet increaseth, (says he) and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to Poverty. A Man may liberally bestow all that is due to Justice, and Charity, and Generosity, and yet increase; and another may think to grow rich by sordid Saving, by withholding his Neighbour's Due, by crafty and fraudulent Bargains, by refraining from Acts of Charity and Generosity, and yet notwithstanding these thriving Tricks, may be but poor. In this respect is their Iniquity vain, that it does not always attain the Things it seeks. And it must needs be, that the Wickedness of the World must sometimes meet with this sort of Disappointment, since, as the Scripture tells us, *The Curse of the Lord is in the House of the Wicked*, Prov. 3. 33. If this be so, it shall work to the Sinners Vexation and Misery in one Way or other, and it does this sometimes in this Way.

Though 'tis also true, that God does many times give Men the things which they seek even by guilty Endeavours: He lets the wicked Voluptuary accomplish his guilty Desires, and the covetous or ambitious person thrive in Wealth, and rise to Honours by ill Arts, there is many a Villany thus far prosperous in the World.

But then to make good still what our Text says, it may be added,

2. All that a Man can gain by Wickedness is of very little worth and goodness. The Fruits of Sin are very empty things. The Sinner gains but the Goods of this World, the Accommodations of this present Life. He at best enjoys but Creatures; and they have all their sufficiency from God, their greatest Goodness comes from his Blessing, and that the Sinner cannot enjoy with them: They are like gaudy Clouds, but such as are empty and without Rain, they are as broken Cisterns that can hold no Water: The Sinner feeds on Husks like the wretched Prodigal. These things may please him much while they are new, but
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in a little time he has suckt out all the Sweetness of them, and they please no more; and, like the Bee, he often spoils the Flower which he sucks the Honey of his Pleasure from. How often may we see those Enjoyments after a little while loath'd and disdain'd, which were sought with the most earnest Desires, which the Man was ready to do any thing to gain them, and which at first perhaps he thought he should take a great and a long delight in? What he thought would be a great Pleasure and Happiness, he after a little while finds to be an ungrateful Drudgery; and that which he expected would be the Comfort of his Life, proves the tedious Burthen of it. Men commonly expect more from the Things of this World, than they are able to afford, and so are disappointed.

Besides; the Goodness and Usefulness of all that which is gotten by Wickedness, terminates in the Body of a Man; all the Rewards of Sin are but outward Goods: They may serve sometimes the Necessities and Conveniences of his Body, but are of no use to his Soul. And they cannot serve all the Necessities of his Body neither, so little Goodness and Worth is in them.

A Man's Wealth and great Estate cannot give him a strong Constitution, nor certainly preserve him in Health, nor always purchase the Recovery of it when 'tis lost; as by all our taking Thought we cannot make one Hair white or black, nor add one Cubit to the Stature: Wealth cannot make the crooked Body straight, nor the Deformed beautiful: The Body may be pleased, but 'tis hurt too, by guilty and intemperate Pleasures; they destroy the Appetites they please; they impair the Health and Strength, and wither the Beauty of the Body; they are usually closely attended with uneasie Loathings, and painful Diseases. Wealth and Honour cannot defend a Man from a Pestilential Air, nor possibly hinder, but that he shall be sometimes incommoded

moded by Extremities of Weather ; they cannot purchase him a fair Day, nor a warm or cool one, according as he has occasion : These cannot relieve a Man from the Grave, nor cure him of Mortality : The Rich as well as the Poor, the Honourable as well as the Mean must die, and go down to the Place of Darkness and Contempt ; *They that trust in their Wealth, and boast themselves in the Multitude of their Riches ; (says the Psalmist) None of them can by any Means redeem his Brother, nor give to God a Ransom for him : That he should live for ever, and not see Corruption,* Psal. 49. 6, 7, 9.

Thus they are but some of our Necessities that the Things of this World can serve, and they are only outward ones too, as well as not all them. And besides, as was said, These Things are of no use to the Soul of Man, which is his noblest Part : His Soul is utterly neglected, and the Interests of that are forgotten and quitted, while he, in the Ways of Wickedness, pursues and enjoys the Things of this World. The Mind can take no delight in guilty and forbidden Pleasures, it is never exercised in a serious Reflection upon them, but with Pain and Torment. This is the meaning of what Solomon says of them, *Prov. 14. 13. In Laughter the Heart is sad, and the end of that Mirth is Heaviness.* And as it has no Pleasure in these, so much rather has it no Profit or Advantage from them : They indeed hurt and prejudice the Soul ; they suppress and debase it ; they engage its Thoughts and Powers in the Service of the Body ; they make it a Slave and Drudge to its Inferior, while it neglects and forgets its own true Interests and Pleasures ; they hinder all honourable Improvements of the Mind, or the Exercises of such to our Honour and Comfort. A Man shall never become the wiser or the more useful, the more worthy and commendable, for a large and excessive Enjoyment of sensual Pleasures : His Mind shall not be the more
steady

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steady or strong, or the more composed and easie for this; but, on the contrary, he shall be the more weak and inconstant, disturbed and unquiet, and they will occasion in him a great deal of hurtful Folly and Passion.

And as little Profit or Benefit to the Soul can arise from the Wealth or Honours of this World. These cannot cure a shameful Vice, nor conceal, but rather expose it; they cannot allay an uneasie turbulent Passion, but rather inflame such: They cannot heal any of the Distempers of the Mind, nor adorn it, and make it amiable in the sight of God. Riches profit not in the Day of Wrath: They cannot atone for the Sins which are committed in the getting them: He that sells his Soul for Wealth, cannot ransom it again therewith: They are greatly mistaken when they think, that a few outward Acts of Charity at the End of their Lives will make amends for Covetousness and Extortion, Rapine and Fraud, practised through the whole Course of them. The Sinner by all his Labour and Cares, gets no Interest in God the chiefest Good: Though he possesses vast Heaps of Gold and Silver, he has no Treasure in Heaven: Though he has Goods laid up (as he thinks) for many Years, yet has he made no Provision for a happy Eternity. He does not pursue, and therefore cannot gain, in his Way, the chiefest and most important good Things, the most necessary and the eternal Ones: He gains but some of the lowest and meanest Rank, with the best Success of all his Endeavours. Very fitly then to this purpose does the wise Man say, *The Treasures of Wickedness profit nothing, but Righteousness delivers from death*, Prov. 10. 2. It is as nothing, all the Benefit that we receive from them, in comparison to this great Benefit, which we want, and they are not able to bestow.

3. For farther Proof of our Text, it may be added, That whatsoever Worth or Goodness there is in those Things

Things which Men gain by wicked Practices, the Pleasures and Satisfaction of it are mightily allay'd, and sometimes utterly spoil'd by the usual Attendants of their Wickedness. It is truly said in Scripture, That Evil pursueth Sinners: And this it does so fatally and surely, that it commonly mars even their Portion in this Life, which is all the Portion of Good that they enjoy. To this purpose is that which Solomon says, *Prov. 22. 17. Bread of Deceit is sweet to a Man, but afterward his Mouth shall be filled with Gravel.* Something or other there shall usually be to spoil the Pleasure and Comfort of the Fruits of Wickedness.

I shall mention some such Things which are also the usual Attendants of it.

(1.) The restless Cravings of inordinate Lusts do often spoil the Pleasure and Satisfaction of such a Man's Enjoyments. When he has what he sought, and it may be sold his Soul for, it does not satisfy but rather encreases, and enflames the Desire it feeds. Vicious Desire (and the Sinner's is such an one) is usually boundless and unsatiable too: It does but encrease with gaining the Things that gratify it, whether they be Pleasures, or Profits, or Honours. Solomon says, *He that loveth Silver shall not be satisfied with Silver, nor he that loveth Abundance with Encrease, Eccles. 5. 10.* And with respect to sensual Pleasure, he says, The Eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the Ear with Hearing. An exorbitant and vitious Thirst is not quenched by the largest Draughts of Pleasure, though Nature's just and moderate Desires may be. And the Case is the same with the Ambitious Man, one Step of Honour makes him desirous of another; and after the Addition of one City or Province to his Dominions, he thirsts for more. 'Gather Gold (says one) heap up Silver, build stately Walks, fill the House with Slaves, the City with Clients, or Creditors; if you cannot compose the Affections

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Affections of the Mind ; if you cannot put an end to unsatiable Desire ; if you cannot free your self from vexing Cares and Fears ; you but give Wine to one in a high Fever, or Honey to one sick of the Jaundice : This Gratification does but encrease the Disease, and then a Man is a Slave to his Lust, and must toil with endless Labour to satisfy that which can never be satisfied : And his Enjoyment does not so much sweeten his Labour, as his Labour spoils his Enjoyment. This continual Craving is like a continual Thirst or a raging Hunger : His desire of having more, often makes him even despise what he has already gained, though it be never so fit to content him : And he does in effect want what he has, while it cannot give him Content and Rest : He wants not the less for all that he has gained, since his Desire and Lust encreases with his Acquisitions : He hazards what he has to gain more sometimes, and it may be like the Dog in the Fable, loses it too. Thus is the Sinner hinder'd from the Comfortable Enjoyment of what he gains by Wickedness.

(2.) This also comes to pass sometimes from the Hatred and Envy of the World, which he incurs by his wicked Practices. He that gets what he has by the Wrong and Abuse of his Neighbours, must needs incur their Hatred and Envy with it : If a Man's Hand, like *Ishmael's*, be against every other Man, that he may promote his own Advantage, then every other Man's Hand will be against his. Wickedness naturally tends to disturb the Peace of the World, but Justice and Goodness tend to promote and preserve it : He that loves, shall be loved ; he that hates, shall be hated ; he that wrongs, Men will be ready to wrong him ; and he that seeks no Bodies Good but his own, no Body will seek his Good.

Some render the Words of our Text, *He that soweth Iniquity shall reap Iniquity* ; which is the same thing with what our Saviour says, *What Measure ye*

mete, it shall be measured to you again. But thus is the Care and Anxiety of the Sinner encreased, which the mistaken Man thought he should put an end to, by his gaining such and such Things. *Nemo autem sollicito bono fruitur*, says the Moralist: This Care and Fear hinders the comfortable Enjoyment. 'Tis through many Hazards and much Difficulty and Danger perhaps, that he got what he has, and now he has not a safe or quiet Possession of it. The Psalmist, speaking of the Prosperity of such Men, says, *They are set in slippery Places*, Psal. 37. 18. When the Sinner has Goods laid up sufficient for many Years yet he cannot always say, *Soul take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry*, because he is alarm'd with Fears of losing what he has, and is troubled with the Uncertainty of his Condition. He is now perhaps in more Care, and engaged in greater Toil and Labour to keep, than it cost him to get what he has: And thus is he farther hindred from the comfortable Enjoyment of it.

(3.) This very often comes to pass from the smart Lashes of his own Conscience. His own Mind will not let him enjoy what he has with any Comfort; while that is upbraiding and condemning him for Base Treachery, and Perfidiousness, or Barbarous Cruelty and Oppression which he used in the getting it. That gives him great Disturbance while it calls him Fool and Brute in the midst of his guilty Pleasures, and tells him how he hurts his Body, impairs his Estate, wrongs his Neighbour, offends God while he follows them. What Pleasure can a Man take in the Applause of Flatterers, in the respect of Inferiours, while his Conscience tells him, that God above hates and despises him, with the World of Holy Spirits he is odious and contemptible. There can be no Enjoyment of what a Man has, while his Mind tells him, 'tis all forfeited by his Sins, he has it not with the Favour of God, but with his Displeasure; that He

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whom he has offended in getting it, can take it away when he pleases, that he is therefore in continual danger of losing it all, he is always obnoxious to a divine Vengeance; If he can hope to defend himself from Men, he cannot hope to defend himself from God. How unhappy must he be who considers that as he has heaped up Riches, he has treasured Wrath too: That this Wrath shall be likely to curse his Family, that they shall never have a comfortable enjoyment of what he has gathered for them, and that it shall lie heavy upon himself, at farthest, when he comes to die, and must go to give an account for what he has done in the Flesh: As it is no profit to a Man, so he shall have no comfort in the thoughts of it, if he could gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul for it: And such Thoughts as these the guilty Conscience will often afflict a Man with. But the Stings and Rebukes of a guilty Conscience will make themselves incomparably more sensible than any sensual Pleasures can be: for while these stroke and tickle the Senses, and reach but to the Body, they pierce even to the Center of the Soul (as some Philosophers would speak) and fix themselves and dwell there.

(4.) This often comes to pass by the just Judgment of God upon the Sinner. Here we may remember again what was said before, that the *Curse of the Lord is in the House of the wicked*. He in Judgment gives them up to the Temptations of the Devil, and to the Conduct of their own violent Lusts: He condemns them to suffer the Tyranny of their own Passions, and the Disorder of their Appetites: their Hearts shall be continually knawn with Envy; their Spirits may be oppress'd with excessive Griefs, even for the smallest, or for merely imaginary Inconveniences; their Minds shall be toss'd, and continually agitated with vain Fears, doubtful and anxious Hopes, with restless and inordinate Desires: And what comfort can a Man take in his Life, when he is tormented

with these painful Diseases of the Mind! What can be the consequence of these things, but Offence and Distast, Weariness and Tribulation! They know not what it is to moderate a Passion, to curb a Desire, to mortifie a Vice, and so are subject to divers Masters, are enslaved to many Tyrants, and exposed to a multitude of Tormentors, which, like a Legion of Devils, will not let a Man rest Day nor Night.

Besides; We are in this Vale of Tears surrounded with many outward Calamities, exposed to innumerable Evils; and we cannot be safe among them, but from the constant Protection of the Divine Providence: And this the Sinner has no right to, and he often wants it. The just Providence of God often leaves him to the assaults of these, and sometimes one cross shall make him uneasie; and when that is gone another shall vex him; one while he shall be afflicted with Pain, at another time with losses, at another with Contempt and Reproaches. The supream Disposer of all things sets himself to mingle Sorrows, and Grief, and Inconveniences with his Portion: He will not let him enjoy any thing pure, or without the mixture of some Sorrow in it.

And farther, There is sometimes a strange and secret Dispensation of Providence attends the Sinner, which hinders him from taking any delight or comfort in what he has, and we can hardly tell why he does not. This is express'd by *Solomon, Eccles. 6. 2.* where he says, he had seen *A Man to whom God had given riches, wealth and honour, so that he wanted nothing for his Soul of all that he desired, yet God had not given him power to eat thereof*: That is, God withheld from him a power to enjoy, to comfort-himself, and take delight in what he had. This is a strange case, but is what we may see sometimes happening! We may see some pining and discontented in that condition wherein they thought to be very happy, and they cannot give a good reason for their discontent; they

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they cannot take delight in what they thought would have been very delightful, and that which is so to others: But the power to enjoy is, it seems, from God, and is another and a different Gift from the things that we possess; and the Sinner may gain large Possessions by his guilty Endeavours, but may want the Blessing of God upon them, and the Power to enjoy them. How many covetous persons may we see wanting what they have, while they have no heart to use it to their Credit or Comfort; to what purpose are such Men made rich? And many may we see thinking themselves mighty unhappy in circumstances which others are ready to envy: And afflicting themselves with imaginary Inconveniences, while they are under no other real one but only that of their own sick and foolish Imagination. Thus does the powerful Curse of God mingle its self with the Sinner's Portion, and spoil the pleasure of what he has while he possesses it. And this is the third Proof of our Text.

(4.) It may be said, he that soweth Iniquity, shall reap but Vanity; in that all the Felicity of a Sinner, is of a very short and transitory duration. Let him gain what he will; let him take what delight and comfort he can in it, this will last but a very little while: It is a Felicity but of a few moments continuance: His Happiness is like a fire of Thorns, which is almost as soon out as it is kindled. It can last no longer than this present Life, and then it must needs be short. This Life is continually hastening away, and so is all his Happiness. The Psalmist truly says, *Man being in Honour, abideth not*, Psalm 49. 12. And Solomon says, *If a Man live many years, and rejoyce in them all; yet let him remember the days of Darkness, for they shall be many*, Eccles. 11. 8. They shall be many

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in comparison to the longest Life on Earth. The Sinner then is to enjoy what he gets here but a little while, and is to be much longer without it; for as he came naked into the World, so he must return naked out of it. Perhaps he spends the greatest part of his Life in getting, and enjoys but for a little while in the latter end of it. His Labour and Care take up the most of his Life, and his Rest and Ease have but a very small Parcel of it. It may be as soon as he has by any Means scraped together a plentiful Portion of this World, and then proposes to himself to sit down and enjoy it, he is then suddenly snatcht away from all by Death. Let us say then with the Psalmist, *Verily every Man in his best Estate is altogether Vanity*; and by consequence it must be true what our Text says, *He that soweth Iniquity shall reap but Vanity.*

And this I think to be now sufficiently prov'd.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

I shall now briefly suggest some USE that we may make of these Things, and conclude.

I. These justify the Providence of God in permitting the outward Prosperity of wicked Men, and should keep us from being any way disturbed when we observe it.

The foregoing Discourse does abundantly demonstrate, That this is a Thing very well consisting with a Providence, and agreeing enough with the Wisdom and Justice of it. God gives them but a poor, low, mean and outward Prosperity: That may be said of any wicked Man's Prosperity, which the Prophet says of theirs who were the Enemies of God's Church, Isa. 29. 8. *It shall be as when an hungry Man dreameth, and behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his Soul is empty: Or as when a thirsty Man dreameth,*
and

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and behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold, he is faint, and his Soul hath Appetite; so shall the multitude be (says he) of all the Nations that fight against Mount Sion. Wicked Men can have no Content, no Satisfaction in their Prosperity. We value these low outward Goods too highly; we account them better than they are; when we envy an ill Man the Possession of them: These are such Things as a Man may have without the Favour and Blessing of God. A Man may have them and not enjoy them. When we see the gaudy outside of a Sinner's Condition, and are apt to call the proud Fool happy for it, let us consider what may dwell within him at the same time; and there perhaps we may see shameful Folly, hurtful Vices, uneasie Passions: He is perhaps held bound in the Chains of his Sins, and his own disorderly Appetites and Passions are his cruel Tormentors; and can we think such a Man highly favoured, or so much deserving Envy as Disdain or Pity? Let us consider too the short continuance of all this Felicity, and not be afraid of these Men, not be discouraged in our Duty, nor impatient if we suffer by them: *For they shall soon be cut down as the Grass, and wither as the green Herb*, Psal. 37. 2. Within a little while the powerful wicked Men will be weak, and the rich poor. He whose Pride and Ambition troubled all the World, and could not be contented with the Bounds of a large Kingdom, shall in a little time be stript of all his Greatness, be confin'd within the Compass of a few Feet of Earth, and become Prisoner to a Grave.

II. To conclude: Let what has been said be able to turn us all from a wicked to a good and virtuous Course of Life. Let us resolve to leave an unprofitable Course of Life; and cease to spend our Labour for that which is not Bread, and our Money

for that which will not profit us. Let us not endure the Thoughts of Losing a Life, of Living to no good Purpose, to no Advantage to our selves; 'tis altogether foolish and unbecoming our Reason to chuse a vain Life, and to aim at no good and profitable End.

But this will appear a very great and strong Argument, if we will consider too, that this Course of Life, as it will not profit, 'twill hurt us; as it can afford no great Advantage, it will bring great Damage: It forfeits and loses us the Favour of God, the everlasting Happiness he would bestow on us: It provokes his Wrath, and tends to everlasting Misery; and should we follow such a Course for no Advantage, to get nothing that is of any great Worth by it? It greatly heightens the Guilt and Folly of Sin, that there is so little Reason for it, so little Inducement to it: It is a thing unnecessary and unprofitable. Let us all then resolve immediately to forsake the Ways of Sin, and betake our selves to a Course of Vertue and Religion. We shall find, that in keeping the Commands of God, there is great Reward: We shall not serve God for nought, tho' we serve the Devil so; *Our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; tho' if we sow Iniquity, we can reap but Vanity.*

THE
PRAYER.

O Most great and most righteous God! the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Thee: We adore and worship Thee, O Lord, who art every-where present and knowest all Things. Thine Eyes behold, and Thine Eyelids try the Children of Men. And Thou, O Lord, dost dispose of us all as pleaseth Thee: Thy Kingdom ruleth over all: If Thou favour us, it is well with us: If Thou hide Thy Face, we are troubled and afflicted: If Thou take away our Breath, we die, and return to the Dust from whence we were created. We do entirely depend upon Thee, and in Thy Hand is our Breath and all our Ways. But, alas! how little do we foolish Creatures consider these Things! when we live as without God in the World, when we take little Care how we behave our selves in Thy sight. We do not regard and seek an Interest in Thy Favour as our greatest Happiness; nor have we so fear'd Thy Displeasure as we should. Oh how foolish and mistaken have we been, while we have thought to mend our Condition, or profit our selves by doing ill, or to do our selves any good by breaking Thy Laws! We believe, O Lord, according to Thy Word and Thy just Sentence and Doom, That Evil pursueth Sinners: That all the Profits and Pleasures which we can gain or enjoy by Wickedness, are very vain and worthless: That in pursuing such we should weary our selves for very Vanity. Convince us, we pray Thee, O Lord, steadily and effectually of these Things; let us not sell our Souls for nought; let us not spend our Life in the pursuit of Shadows, and neglect substantial Things, teach us, that he who sows unto the Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption. And make us to believe, That in keeping Thy Commands there is great Reward; to believe that Thou art, and art a Rewarder of those that diligently seek Thee; that we shall not serve God for nought: But if we do by patient continuance in well-doing seek for Glory and Honour, and Immortality, we shall obtain Eternal Life.

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Let Thy bounteous and faithful Promises effectually allure us from the Ways of Folly and Perdition. Oh that we were so wise, as constantly to take Thy Testimonies for our Heritage! to desire above all Things the Happiness which Thou hast prepar'd for them that love and serve Thee! O turn Thou, we humbly pray, the Byass and Propensity of our Souls that Way! Give us not up to the Choice and Pursuit of this World! Condemn us not to have all our Portion in this short, miserable and transitory Life! Strengthen and encrease our Faith of unseen Things, that it may be in us the Evidence of Things not seen, and the Substance of Things hoped for: Let this quicken, let this encourage us at all times to our Duty, by assuring us, that our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. By assuring us of everlasting Rest to reward our Labours in well-doing, of our having fulness of Joy in Thy Presence, and Rivers of Pleasures at Thy Right Hand for evermore. Deliver us, O Spirit of Truth, from all the Deceits of the World, the Flesh and the Devil; lead us into all Truth necessary for us to know in order to Salvation, and make us to pursue the Things which make for our everlasting Peace. Give us, we pray thee, a Treasure in Heaven, thro' the Merits of Jesus Christ.

In whose Name we humbly make our Prayers and Supplications for all Men: Give, O Lord, to all Nations Unity, Peace and Concord; and pour out Thy Spirit upon all Flesh, that they may all know Thee from the Least to the Greatest. Bless Thy Church and prosper it, and make it yet more Holy and more Universal. Bring in all Jews, Turks, Infidels and Hereticks into the Way of Thy Truth, and into the Way of Salvation. We pray Thee pour down Thy abundant Blessings upon these Nations wherein we live; deliver us from those that hate us: Continue to us Thy True Religion establish'd among us in the Administrations of it, and continue us in the due and universal Practice of what it teaches and requires of us. Bless, we pray Thee, our Queen and Magistrates; be Thou their Guide and Defence, and make them useful Instruments to promote Thy Glory amongst us, and our Happiness. Let us know those that are over us in the Lord and admonish us, those who are Thy Ministers in Holy Things, and esteem them very highly in Love for their Works-sake, and follow their godly Counsels, and good Examples. Grant, we beseech Thee, that the Means of Grace which we have this Day enjoy'd, may
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be effectual upon us to the Salvation of our Souls. Pardon the Imperfections of our Services, and graciously accept them thro' the Merits of Jesus Christ. In whose Name we present and dedicate our selves to Thee; we recommend our Relations and Friends to Thy Mercy, and all that are desolate and afflicted; and we pray for the Pardon and Conversion of our Enemies. We commit our selves to the Care of Thy Providence this Night, beseeching Thee to keep us in Safety while we are not in a Condition to look to our selves: And if it shall please Thee to add yet more Days to our Lives, we desire to spend them all in Thy excellent Service; to which purpose we humbly implore the continual Guidance of Thy Spirit, to whom with the Father and the Son, one Infinite and Eternal God, we ascribe all Praise and Glory for ever and ever.

OUR Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. Amen.

G O D's H A T R E D O F S I N,

Demonstrated and Improved,

Let us Pray:

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorifie thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prov. 15. 9. Former Part.

*The Way of the Wicked is an Abomination
to the Lord.*

IT is in the Heart of most Sinners, that God takes little or no Notice of what is done by us here below, or if he does take Notice, that 'tis without any Concern about what we do: They do not think those Things offend him which they encline to, and which

which are pleasing to themselves ; nor will believe that he is so displeased as some represent him to be with any of their Actions. And from hence it is so small and light a Matter with many to do those Things which are sinful : It is that which many are accustomed, and habituated to do, and are contented to be so. The smallest Temptation is able to make a Man commit a Sin : Yea, without any Temptation they will readily run into it ; and instead of avoiding and repelling Temptations, they industriously seek them, and delight to entertain them. It is become so common a thing to do wickedly, that Men have no Horrour at any but the very grossest Crimes, such as would lessen a Man's Reputation in the World, or expose him to Penal Laws, and they are but very few.

But these Things come to pass for want of a due Consideration of such Truths, as that which the Wise Man here delivers, in saying, *The Way of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord.* The most Holy and Almighty God takes Notice of the Actions of Men, is acquainted with all our Ways, and resents with infinite Dislike and Hatred, whatever we do that is contrary to his most excellent Commands. It is not an indifferent Thing to him what our Actions are : But as he that made us has given us Laws for the Direction of our Actions, so every Transgression of those Laws and Rules, which is that which is call'd *Wickedness*, is odious and abominable to him. A very terrible Consideration this is to those that have not taken any Notice of it before, and so have liv'd carelessly ; but it is therefore necessary to such, to reclaim them from these offensive Ways ; And if any Man does so well lay it to his Heart, as to give it power to do so, he shall find it as happy and comfortable in the Fruits and Effects of it.

To

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To put you in mind of This, I shall at present fix my Discourse upon it ; and to give it the more Force, I shall insist upon these Heads of Discourse concerning it.

1. To confirm and prove what is here said.
2. To shew you the Inferences which we may raise from it.
3. To make some Application.

In the first Place, I shall endeavour to make this undeniably evident and clear, *That the Way of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord.*

To prove this in the shortest and most convincing Method, to the Reason of Mankind, I shall insist upon these Arguments, which will shew whence this comes to pass, that the Sins of Men are so odious to Almighty God.

I shall make appear *Why* it is thus, which will moreover prove *That* it is so ; and that by the Following Particulars.

1. There is a sort of Contrariety in Sin to the very Nature of God, or a peculiar and extraordinary Unlikeness to Him. Upon every thing besides this, that is, upon all that God has made, there is some impression of some of the Divine Attributes, and so with the infinite Disproportion and Inequality between God and a Creature, there is yet some Likeness : But upon Sin there is nothing of this, it has no Character of any Attribute of God, and it utterly defaces all such Things upon any Creature, so far as it prevails in that Creature. His excellent Law is but a Transcript or Copy, as it were, of Perfections and Excellencies that are in himself ; his *Law his Holy, Just and Good*, as he is Holy, Just and Good : When we break those Laws, then we become as unlike Him, as 'tis possible for us to be ; and we act as He in His Nature does abhor to act. When we despise and dishonour Him, and act contrary to that Superlative Esteem and profound Reverence which is his due : This is contrary to what

is natural (as we may say) to Him; who does necessarily, and justly esteem Himself, and seek His own Honour and Glory, as he is an infinitely excellent and perfect Being, the Source and First Cause of all other, and Supreme to all. All true and sincere Love is Conformity to God. *He that dwells in Love, dwells in God, and God in him; for God is Love,* says the Apostle, *1 John 4. 16.* And then all Malice, and Envy, and all the Exercises of them, are contrary to Him. When we are enraged with every little Affront, or will not forgive those that injure us, these Things are contrary to the Nature of God, who is slow to Anger, and willing to be reconcil'd. All the filthy and sensual Sins which Men commit, carry a Contrariety to the pure and spiritual Nature of God; to his just preference and esteem of spiritual Properties and Qualities, before those that are only belonging to material Things, When we lie, and deceive, and impose upon our Neighbour, this is contrary to the Divine Faithfulness and Truth. When we proudly despise and disdain those that are below us, rather than encourage and comfort them; and insult over the Afflictions and Miseries of our Neighbours, rather than endeavour to relieve and help them; this is directly contrary to the condescending Goodness of the Almighty; who tho' he be infinitely above us all, yet he has regard to and takes Care of the meanest of his Creatures, and does not despise even the least of them: Thus are the Sins of Men contrary to the Nature of the Blessed God. But from hence it must needs come to pass, that they are also abominable and odious to Him. As the most Holy God does necessarily love Himself, and take delight in the incomparable Excellencies of his own Nature; so that which is thus contrary to those Excellencies, must needs be infinitely detestable and offensive. He can never be out of love with Himself, therefore he can never be reconcil'd to any sinful Act, nor take Notice of such a thing, without infinite Detestation and Abhorrence.

2. The Sins of Men are contrary to the Creator's Design in making Mankind, and therefore also are an abomination to Him.

His first and immediate Design and End in this, as in all other of His Works, was His own Glory: To magnifie and honour Himself by the Excellency of His Works, by leaving upon them the Characters of those Perfections that made them: And the Excellency and Worth of His Works is to His Praise; hence 'tis said by the Psalmist, *All thy Works praise thee, O God, Psal. 145. 10.* that is, they acknowledge Thy glorious Perfections, each of them according to their Nature, by representing the Marks and Characters of those that are employ'd in the doing them. Now Man having in his Constitution an immortal Spirit, which is capable of being wise, just, good and true, the Creator endowed him with those Qualifications, that he might represent, as far as his Nature was capable, these Excellencies and Perfections of his Author: And in retaining these we had done Him that Honour, as we may speak, but in that we have lost these, we cannot pay it. This our Church intimates in her excellent and most instructive Liturgy, when we are there directed to pray to God, that we may be enabled by His Grace to shew forth his Praise not only with our Lips, but in our Lives, by giving up our selves to His Service, and by walking before Him in Righteousness and Holiness all our Days. In the Exercises of Righteousness and Holiness, we praise and honour Him who made us for such Exercises, and that we should therein represent these Perfections of our Maker: But when we forsake the Rules of these Vertues in our Practice, we deprive Him of that Honour.

Again, We may doubtless suppose, that it was the Creator's Design to entertain and delight Himself in the Reflections (as it were) of His own glorious Perfections from the Creatures that he had made: And this seems to be intimated, at least, in the History of the

he Creation, where he is represented as taking a Review of every Day's Work, and as approving or being pleased with it. Now this Reflection of his own Excellencies, and the Satisfaction attending it, he enjoys in us when we are pure, and holy, and good, and true.

But in all our Sins we contradict this Design, and do present to His View nothing but what is contrary to His Nature, nothing but what is therefore to the utmost degree displeasing to Him.

And then as this is contrary to His Design in making us, it must needs be that the Sins of Men must be highly offensive to God. His Design and End is Just and Excellent, that which frustrates and contradicts it then must be Vile and Unjust. But we speak after the Manner of Men, when we say, That the Almighty and Allwise God does not attain His End in any of His Works, because the necessity of our weak Capacities requires this, and His condescending Goodness allows it, that we may be the more sensible of what is said of Him. We are therefore to conclude, that the Sins of Men are most highly displeasing to God upon this Account, from what we may observe in our selves in a like Case; from the Discontent and Displeasure we conceive when we have laid out much Care or Labour, or much Cost upon a particular Design, and it is all frustrate, and comes to nothing of what we expected from it.

3. The Sins of Men contradict all the Rights of the Great Creator, and therefore must needs be detestable to Him: This necessarily follows from the former: He that makes any Thing, may design it for what End he pleases, and then he has Right to expect it should serve that End which it was made for. Since God raised up the Bodies of our first Parents from the Dust, and breathed into them the Breath of Life, and he by a Divine and Secret Operation fashions each of us in the Womb, and still

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formeth

formeth the Spirit of Man within him, He is then the Author of all our Faculties and Powers both of Soul and Body. And then He has a Right to design the End and Purpose for which we shall serve: And He directs us to that End by the Rule of His most excellent Laws; when we observe them, we answer our End, when we break those Laws, we do contradict it, and therein we rob Him of His Due, and deny Him His Right; and we may be sure He is concerned to have what is due to Him from His Creatures. He is sensible and provoked when we deny Him His Right: This is a monstrous Affront, and most unworthy Behaviour towards Him. There arises from this Foundation a Threefold Right which God has to our Obedience, all which is contradicted by the Sins of Men, and every particular makes some Addition to the Evil and Vileness of Sin.

(1.) All our Sins are against the Right of a Sovereign Lord; such an one has the Great God over all His Creatures. *He is God over all*, as the Apostle speaks: And the Prophet says, *Thou, even Thou, art Lord alone*, Neh. 9. 6. He is our Sovereign Lord, and in exercise of His Sovereignty has laid His Laws upon us, and in Submission to them we ought to acknowledge it. Mankind are not left at liberty to act as they will, and to own no Superiors, we are all under a Law, and that is the Law of Him who is the *King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only Wise God*, 1 Tim. 1. 17. All our Sins then are contrary to an unquestionable Right of Sovereignty over us. The Sinner despises the Empire of the Great Lord of the World: He does, as far as he can, depose Him from His Throne, tramples upon His Laws, and slights His Authority. It is the implicit Language (at least) of all Wickedness, *Who is Lord over us? Who shall controul us? We will not have the Lord to rule over us!* The Sinner makes himself his God, and sets up his own Will and Inclinations for

for a Law to him. What is said of the sensual and voluptuous Sinner, That he makes his Belly his God, may be applied to all other Sorts: He that is Covetous or Ambitious, makes himself his God; he makes it his End to gratifie his own Desires in other kinds: For this Reason is Covetousness in particular call'd *Idolatry*. Thus there is Rebellion and Idolatry in all Sin, and the greatest Arrogance and Pride! while the poor depending Creature will not own his Dependance, but will live to himself alone, as if he were sufficient to himself; and while we do not suffer Him to dispose of and govern us, who alone is Lord over us! And can we think that the jealous God will not highly resent what comes under these black Characters!

(2.) God has a Right to our Obedience as he is Owner and Proprietor of us all: He is our Owner, we are His Property. God says of all Things that He has made, *The World is mine, and the Fulness thereof*, Psal. 50. 12. And Psal. 100. 3. 'tis said, *We are his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture*. The Psalmist had acknowledged just before, that it was *He that made us, and not we our selves*: To which this is added, as what does truly follow from thence. This then does give Him an unquestionable Right to dispose of Mankind, as well as of the rest of His Creatures. The Apostle makes use of this Argument, and says, *Glorifie God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are God's*, 1 Cor. 6. 20. Should not God have Liberty to do what He will with His own, to order and appoint the Actions and use of it as pleaseth Himself? But the Sinners say in all the Transgressions of their Words, *Our Tongues are our own*; and the same they pretend to concerning all their Faculties and Powers in all other their Sins. These deny the Universal Proprietor that Right of governing and disposing as He pleases what is His. But how would it enrage poor contemptible Man to

be denied this Liberty? And if we think it reasonable and just for us to be angry in such a Case, how can we imagine but God must be highly displeased?

(3.) God has the Right of a great and bountiful Benefactor to the Obedience of Mankind. He it is that has given us our selves, and all that we have: He freely made us: He made us to enjoy large Exercises and Expressions of His Bounty: He furnish'd the World, which we so much Delight in, with all the good Things it contains, and gives to every Man the Portion which he delights and comforts himself with. We have nothing but what we receiv'd from Him. He daily loads us with His Benefits. And when he has done so much for us, without any Obligation laid upon Him by us, to the doing of it, does not this lay a great Obligation upon us, to study what will please Him, and to do His Will? Ought we not to be very thankful to Him who has greatly favoured us? to please Him who so often pleases us? to honour Him who has crowned us with Honour and Dignity, in making us little lower than the Angels, and giving us Dominion over the Things about us? In our Sins then, there is the basest Ingratitude, as well as Injustice, and Arrogance, and Pride. We affront and injure a Friend. He gives to us in many Things, what He does not owe, and demands of us nothing but what is His Due. He cannot be beholden to us; we cannot oblige Him. This enhances the Rate and Value of his Benefits, and by consequence the Obligation of them too; and that as much heightens the Evil and Ingratitude of our Sins. God expects a thankful Obedience in Return for the Benefits He bestows. This is the meaning of that Preface to the Ten Commandments; *I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, out of the House of Bondage.* And He is very highly and justly offended if

if his Obligations do not meet with such a Return. It was said, with a very angry Resentment, of the Nation of the Jews, *I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me*, Isa. 1. 2. Therefore the Heavens and the Earth are called to bear witness to, or to admire so enormous a Thing: As if the Sun should be ashamed that he had shined upon such Creatures, and the Earth that it had born so ungrateful a Burthen. And when 'tis added in the 4th Verse of that Chapter, *They have forsaken the Lord*, 'tis also said, *They have provoked the Holy One of Israel to Anger*. We cannot imagine surely but it must exceedingly provoke the Great God to return him Evil for Good; to return Hatred for Kindness, and Injuries for great and innumerable Benefits; yet this is the unfitting Return which sinful Men make to their Kind, Gracious and Good God.

Thus I have, I suppose, sufficiently prov'd the Truth of what is asserted in our Text, *That the Way of the wicked is an Abomination to the Lord*. I shall now make this appear to be a very important and concerning Truth, such as deserves to be well laid to heart, and always remembered by every one of us. And this will appear by the Inferences which it affords us; which I shall now set before you.

1. This implies, and may teach us the exceeding Vileness and Evil that is in Sin. This may very justly be concluded meerly from God's Hatred of it; and by our Way of proving the Text, while the Hatred of God against Sin has been justified as well as prov'd, we may be helped to make this Conclusion the more evidently. It certainly infers a real and great Disparagement and Baseness in the Thing it self to be hated of God. He is infinitely Wise and Just, and can never, through any Mistake, or Envy, or Injustice, call Evil Good, or Good Evil. He does never condemn or dislike any thing that is really Excellent

cellent and Good ; nor approve or esteem of any Thing that is truly Vile and Evil. Accordingly Sin is, and we should account it to be, the vilest and worst Thing in the World. This has a peculiar Unlikeness to the Divine Nature, which is the Centre and Rule of all Excellency, and has the greatest Contrariety and Unlikeness to it that can be. And it must follow, that this does more than all Things else, debase and dishonour a Man : There is nothing can make him so vile, so contemptible as this ; and nothing can render him truly deserving of Honour, while he harbours and vilifies himself with this ; the greatest worldly Honours cannot honour this ; but this can stain and dishonour them. This can make the Noble Creature *Man* more vile than the Beasts that perish. This deserves our greatest Shame and Abhorrence : So far is it from Reason, so highly absurd, for a Man to be proud of his Wickedness, and make a Boast of his Sins ! This were to glory in his Shame.

2. We may also infer *God's Hatred* of the Sinner as such. The latter Part of the Text seems to direct us to make such an Inference from this former ; which says, *But he loveth him that followeth after Righteousness* : As he loves the Righteous Man for his Righteous Ways, he must needs hate and dislike the Sinner for his wicked Ones : So *David* says, *Psal. 5. Thou art not a God that hast Pleasure in Wickedness : Neither shall Evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight. Thou hatest all Workers of Iniquity.* Sin must needs expose a Man to the Great Dislike and Displeasure of God, and make him vile in his Eyes : It makes us as unlike him as we can possibly be : It utterly destroys, so far as it prevails in us, the Image of God, which is our greatest Glory, and that by which alone we were very good. How can God regard that Man with Favour, who daily affronts him with willing habitual Sins ? How can he view him with Complacence

cence and Approbation, who daily defiles himself? who presents to his view, in a wicked Course of Life, nothing but what is most offensive to the pure Eyes of his Glory.

But then it should be well consider'd by us whose Displeasure and Anger it is that we incur. 'Tis that of the Almighty God and the Supreme Disposer of all Things; who can most easily revenge the Affronts which we offer him when he will, who can afflict us as he pleases: 'Tis he upon whom is our whole Dependance for Life and Happiness; without whose Favour we can never be happy in this World or the next. The Sinner may divert and deceive himself with the sensible Enjoyments of this World, while the divine Patience spares him; but he cannot be happy with these, they are but empty Shadows, or a meer Dream of Felicity; they can give no Content or Satisfaction; nor have they any considerable Sweetness in them, but when the Favour of God bestows and blesses them; and his Favour which the wretched Sinner forfeits, is better worth than all of them. This made the Psalmist say, *That the Light of his Countenance* afforded more Joy, more hearty Pleasure and Satisfaction, *than the Increase of Corn and Wine*, Psalm 4.

And then besides, we should consider too, That 'tis God who does dispose of our Eternal State, and makes us happy or miserable for ever, according as we please or displease him now. Such is he whose dislike and hatred the Sinner does incur and bring upon himself by his Sins.

3. We may from hence infer too, the Sincerity and Truth of all the severest Threatnings of God against the Sins of Men. From these Things we may justly fear and expect that he will certainly fulfill them; we may believe, that he has really said those severe Things, and that he means as they speak. When we are told, *It shall not be well with the Wicked*,

Ecclef. 8. 13. *That Evil pursueth Sinners*, Prov. 13. 21. That Mischief and Judgment haunt and follow them every where; Mortal Dangers surround and attend them constantly; Vengeance watches over them continually. When we are told, *That Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, shall be upon every Soul that does Evil*, as in Rom. 2. 9. we see reason to believe these Things, and to conclude, that no Sinner can be safe or happy while he remains such: That these Threatnings shall be sadly fulfill'd upon those who shall be so hardy as to try the Truth of them.

But to speak to this Inference the more effectually, I shall speak more particularly: And therefore I shall add, that God will take Vengeance on the Sins of particular Persons (who are obstinate and impenitent in this Life) in the Everlasting Punishment of them in the other: This is that which he has threatned, and we may justly expect he will do, upon this his great and just Displeasure against the Sins of Men. Men are very willing and desirous to believe, that the transient Acts of their Wickedness, and the Transgressions of a short Life shall not be revenged with so long Punishment; and are apt to flatter themselves, that after a while Divine Justice will relent, and give the miserable Prisoners in Hell a release from their Torments: But those that entertain such Hopes, take very wrong Measures both of the Evil and Provocation of Sin, and of the Wisdom and Justice of God. It is certain and evident in Scripture, that God has threatned everlasting Punishment to the Sins of Men. In Dan. 12. 2. the Angel tells that Prophet, that *some should rise again from the Dead to Everlasting Life, and some to Shame and Everlasting Contempt*. Our Saviour tells us, that the Sentence upon wicked Men, in the Day of Judgment, shall be; *Depart from me, ye cursed, into Everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*,

Angels, Matth. 25. 41. And in the last Verse of the Chapter, he says of them, *These shall go away into Everlasting Punishment.* The Apostle, in 2 *Thess.* 1. 9. calls the Punishment intended for such, *Everlasting Destruction.* And since in these and the like Scriptures, where the Fates of good and bad Men are spoken of, the same Phrase and Expression is made use of concerning the Duration both of the one and the other; we have as much reason to fear that the one will be Eternal, as to hope that the other will be so. Since the just and immutable God appears plainly to have declar'd that he will thus punish the Sins of Men, it is the greatest and most foolish Presumption to expect the contrary.

Especially if we consider too, that which has been set before us concerning the Evil and Provocation of Sin: That 'tis the Affront of an infinite Majesty, Contempt of our Maker, Rebellion against our Sovereign, and Ingratitude to a Friend; that it has nothing upon it of any Impression of any Attribute of God, but is the most unlike, the most contrary thing to him in the World. Upon these Accounts sure we might easily believe that he has an infinite Hatred and Displeasure against it; and that since that Displeasure cannot be infinitely exercised upon a finite Being in the Intensity of his Sufferings, it is but just in God to resolve that they shall be eternally continued: And though all Sins are not equal, that yet the Punishment of all shall be of the same duration, because the wise Justice of God can make a difference between several Sinners, in the different degree and intensity of their Sufferings. Besides, though the Act of a Sin be short, and of but a Moment's duration, yet the Guilt of it is a remaining and abiding Thing. When once a sinful Act is committed, it remains done, and cannot be recalled; and the Sinner remains guilty for ever, unless he obtains his Pardon by timely Repentance. And if Repentance,

penitance, and the Benefit of it, be allow'd in Hell that State could not be called *Death and Destruction*, as the Scripture usually names it.

But to conclude this Particular; let us consider, that God's having threatned everlasting Punishment in vain, is a great Provocation to him to inflict it upon those that will not fear and avoid it. The Threatning is a fair Warning to Mankind, and a Means fit and proper to make them avoid the Evil. The righteous God does not betray Men into Misery; he has told them the worst that shall be the Consequent of their Sins. And shall he, after all, think this Punishment too great to be inflicted, when Men do not think it great enough to be feared? Men chuse the vain Pleasures of Sin, which are but for a Season, with the eternal Torments that follow, rather than a Life of Holiness and Everlasting Happiness: And shall they not have then their own Choice? Is there any Wrong done them? or have they hard Measure, when they were not at all impos'd upon by God, and have but what they chose?

It is now time that I suggest what *USE* we should make of these Things; which I shall do briefly, and conclude.

I. Let us take heed to our Ways, and be very watchful over our selves, that we may avoid all that is sinful. It is fit to be our greatest Concern and Care, that which shall mingle it self with every other Concern, and our constant endeavour, that we cease from Evil, and do Good. It is certainly true what *Solomon* says, *Prov. 28. 14. Happy is the Man that feareth always.* It is a very wise and happy thing to be always possess'd with a prudent Care not to offend God; who has all our Interests both in this World and the next, at his disposal; whose Displea-
sure

sure can make us miserable for ever, and in whose Favour is Life Everlasting. 'Tis our Wisdom and Happiness to take Care that we may avoid so vile and so ill a thing as Sin; that which will so debase, and pollute, and disparage us: To avoid that which our own Consciences must often upbraid us for, what we must hereafter call our selves Fools for, and will make us vile in our own Eyes, whenever we come to understand and consider it.

II. What Evil we have been guilty of for want of this Care, let us, as it were, undoe it again by a hearty Repentance. Shall we not mourn for so vile a Thing as Sin! for having contracted the greatest and most shameful Disparagement! for our having forfeited the everlasting Favour of God, and for having undone our selves? And may we not justly hate that which has so much Ill and Mischief in it as this? May we not justly hate what God abhors? Should we not shew our Love to him by hating what is so offensive, and displeasing to him? And then if we do sincerely abhor the Ills we have done, we must forsake them for the future. A Man can never contentedly go on in the Course that he himself does abhor. And let us consider, to persuade our selves to this Repentance, the Encouragement that God has kindly given us to practise it: He has given us a Promise of Pardon, if we will repent: Though our Sins are so highly displeasing to him, though he so justly hates them, yet his infinite Mercy will forgive even the greatest, and the greatest Number of them, upon our unfeigned Repentance. *Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the Unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have Mercy, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon,* Isa. 55. 7.

III. Lastly,

III. Lastly, Since we fly from so great and mischievous an Evil as Sin is, and betake our selves to so much Good and Happiness, as infinite Mercy bestows, when we repent and return to our Duty; we should, as much as can be, hasten our Repentance, we ought in reason to admit of no Delay in such a Matter. If this has been at all delay'd by any, it is too much. Why should any Man resolve, That he will be vile and base, that he will be odious to God, and obnoxious to his Wrath, but a little longer? This is a State not to be endured at all. Who can tell how long the Divine Vengeance will delay? Who can assure himself that God will bear with him to the end of his Days? Can we too soon be safe? too soon be in favour with the Almighty? Can we too soon cease to gather Sorrows, to heap up Wrath, to provide Woe and Misery for our selves? Or can we too soon live as best becomes us, as our Reason and our everlasting Interest require? and begin to treasure up Joys, to lay up Rewards and Happiness for our selves? These are Things surely that cannot be done too soon. If there be good Reason to forsake a wicked Life at all, 'tis unreasonable in the least to delay the doing so. When we come to condemn our selves in earnest for our Sins, we shall condemn our selves too for continuing so long in them. Let us all then be able to say with *David*, at least from this time, *I made haste, and delayed not, O Lord, to keep thy Commandments.*

THE
PRAYER.

O Lord, the Eternal God, Creator and Owner, and Sovereign Lord of all Things. By Thee the Heavens were framed, and all the Host of them by the Breath of Thy Mouth. Thou hast made the Earth and the Sea, and all that is in them; and all that Thou hast made is Thine: The World is Thine, and the Fulness thereof; all is of Thee, and thro' and to Thee. We who are now before Thee here, are a small handful of Creatures whom Thou hast brought into Being; from the Ground Thou raisedst our Living Bodies, and by Thy mighty Power hast formed the Spirit within us. And we, Lord, are Thine, Thy Right and Property; we are in nothing our own, but Thou art Lord over us: We owe Thee the entire Homage of our Souls and Bodies, which are Thine, for we are Thy People, O Lord, and the Sheep of Thy Pasture. We humbly acknowledge, O Lord, Thy Right in us; and we now own the Obligations Thou hast laid upon us. And we here present to Thee our selves intirely to be a holy and living Sacrifice, which is our just and most reasonable Service: O Lord, let us be accepted with Thee thro' Jesus Christ. We confess that we have deserved Thou shouldest reject and abhor us, who have been hitherto so little concern'd to please Thee, who have so often and so exceedingly polluted our selves with that which is most odious and offensive to Thee. We are exceeding guilty and obnoxious to Thy Wrath and Vengeance, in that we have been Rebels against Thy Sovereignty over us: We have been unjust to Thy Propriety in us: We have been ungrateful to Thy Goodness towards us. Now we are heartily sorry for all our Misdoings, the Remembrance of them is grievous to us, the Burthen of them is intolerable: But Thou, O Lord, whose Property is always to have Mercy, who hast promised Forgiveness to all that, with a penitent Heart and true Faith in the Blood of Christ, turn un-

to Thee, have Mercy upon us: Have Mercy upon us, O Lord, according to the Multitude of Thy tender Compassions, and blot out all our Transgressions. We fly from Thy Justice to to the Footstool of Thy Mercy, and there prostrate our selves in the Name of Jesus Christ. O Lord, for His sake forgive us all that is past, and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please Thee, in newness and holiness of Life, to Thy Honour and Glory. Do Thou make us sincere in the Dedication of our selves again unto Thee, in this Renewal of our Resolutions to serve Thee. Create in us, O Lord, a clean Heart, and renew in us a Right Spirit. Do Thou make us to love Thy Law; to hate every false Way; and to delight in the Way of Thy Testimonies, more than in all Riches. O Lord, rescue us, we pray Thee, from the Bonds of our beloved, or habitual Sins; save and deliver us from the Pollutions of a wicked World; let us be blameless and harmless, the Children of God without Rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation. Deliver us from all the Craft and Subtilty, and from all the fiery Darts of the wicked One: And let us never be hardened by the Deitfulness of any Sin.

We pray also, O Lord, for the Conversion of others, as well as of our selves. O let Thy Gospel run and be glorified, from the rising of the Sun, to the going down of the same; and let many be turned from Darknes to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God. We especially pray for the good Estate of Thy Catholick Church; that Thou wouldest purge out of it, all that does offend Thee, and grant that all who profess and call themselves Christians, may hold the Faith in Unity of Spirit, in the Bond of Peace and in Righteousness of Life. Look in Mercy upon these Nations to which we belong; forgive our crying Sins, and turn us from every evil Way. Bless us with the Continuance of pure Ordinances; and with a mighty Efficacy and Effect of them, for the promoting of Piety, Righteousness, Charity and Sobriety amongst us. Bless, we pray Thee, our most Gracious Queen, our Subordinate Magistrates, those that minister to thee in Holy Things amongst us, and all Ranks and Degrees of Men besides. Make us to fear Thee, to depart from all Iniquity, to serve to Thy Glory, and to the Happiness and Welfare of each other, and defend us all from all Foreign or Domestick Enemies of Religion and Peace. We commend also to Thy infinite
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Mercies, all our Friends, Relations or Enemies : Those that have done us Kindness, we pray Thee, O Lord, abundantly to requite them ; and those that have done us any Injury, Father forgive them. Let Thy Word, which we have this Day heard, have Power to sanctifie and cleanse us from all Unrighteousness. We humbly hope for the Mercy we have sought of Thee this Day, and desire we may commit ourselves to Thy careful and gracious Providence this Night and for evermore. Lord, bless and keep us ; lift up the Light of Thy Countenance, and guide us by Thy Counsel, till Thou hast brought us to Thy Glory. All we humbly ask upon the Merits of Jesus Christ, beseeching Thee to hear us for his sake, and farther in his own Words, saying,

OUR Father, which art in Heaven ; Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this Day our daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into Temptation : But deliver us from Evil. Amen.

THE
M E A N N E S S
O F
This Present LIFE,
Prov'd and Apply'd.

Let us pray :

Prevent us, O Lord, in all our Doings with thy most gracious Favour, and further us with thy continual Help, that in all our Works begun, continued and ended in Thee, we may glorifie Thy Holy Name, and finally by Thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Job 14. 2.

He cometh forth like a Flower, and is cut down : He fleeth also as a Shadow, and continueth not.

TO know who it is that these Words of Job do describe in so mean and disparaging a Character, we need but look back to the 1st Verse of this Chapter, where we shall find he is speaking of Man. It is Man that *Cometh forth like a Flower,*
†
and

and is cut down; He fleeth as a Shadow, and continueth not. It was his Design to represent by this Expression, the contemptible and wretched Condition of our present Life, which we very foolishly and unreasonably dote upon and admire.

This Life on Earth was never intended to be our happiest State; and by reason of the Sin of Mankind, it is fallen much below that Degree of Happiness, which the Creator had intended it should enjoy. Yet this pitiful State is that the wretched Sons of Men are most extremely fond of. Here they would always be; this takes up all their Thoughts and Care. They know, or at least mind no Heaven, but Earth; and think to heap up Felicity as they gather worldly Enjoyments. We study how to live happily till we die, and dote upon fading Pleasures, as if we were always to enjoy them. We commonly live here as if after this Life we were to be no longer, and there were no better Things attainable, than what this Life possesses. And while we mind this World, we neglect the other; we do not seek the better Happiness of that, and lose it for want of seeking it: Yea, we forfeit that Happiness which is to come, and deserve, and incur Everlasting Misery, by what our too great Love of this Life, and its Enjoyments do engage us in. Very much of the Wickedness of this World, and the Misery of the next is due to this unhappy Cause. To render a Temporal Life happy, as we suppose, we spoil an Eternal One, or incur an Eternal Death; we serve our Bodies to the Destruction of our Souls: The great Folly of which our Saviour suggests by that Question, *Mark 8. 36. What shall it profit a Man if he shall gain the whole World and lose his Soul? Or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul?*

To meet with this unhappy and dangerous Errour, as much as this Text without straining it will allow,

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I shall

I shall employ the following Discourse about Three Things.

I. I shall enquire and make it appear from other Scriptures, what Intimations concerning our present Life this Text affords us.

II. I shall insist a little upon the Illustration of those Intimations.

III. I shall add the due Improvement and Application of them.

In the first Place, Let us compare this Text of Scripture with others, that we may derive from it the more certainly and evidently the Instructions it contains. In 1 Pet. 1. 24. 'tis said, *All Flesh is as Grass, and all the Glory of Man as the Flower of Grass: The Grass withereth, and the Flower falleth away.* And in the next Verse he adds, *But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.* By this Opposition of the Word that endureth, to the Grass and the Flower of it which falleth away, we may understand, That by the Comparison of a Flower the Holy Spirit would teach us this Life is not of long continuance: The Flower is the shortest liv'd Part even of those Plants that have the shortest duration, and is upon that account fit to mind us of the short Continuance of this present Life. Farther, in Psalm 103. ver. 15, 16. we are told, *As for Man, his Days are as Grass, as a Flower of the Field, so he flourisheth: For the Wind passeth over it, and it is gone.* This short-liv'd Flower is expos'd as the Flower of the Field; 'tis liable to many destructive and mortal Accidents; yea, if but the Wind passes over it, it is gone; 'tis more easily destroy'd; 'tis a thing may look fair and beautiful, but has very little strength. That thus it is with Man, is the Psalmist's meaning here: He is as feeble as the Flower of the Field, a small Mischief may snatch him away in his Prime. Thus the Scripture teaches by this Comparison, the Frailty and Weakness, as well as the Shortness of Hu-

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mane Life. Again, *Psalms* 102. ver. 11. the Psalmist, speaking of himself, says, *My Days are like a Shadow that declineth*, which is as if he had said, While my Afflictions last, and I hope for better Days, my Life declines apace, it wasts continually away. In *Psalms* 144. ver. 4. 'tis said, *Man is like to Vanity, his Days are as a Shadow that passeth away*. From these Scriptures we may learn, That by the Comparison of a *Shadow* is taught us how transitory our present Life is: It is continually passing away, and spending it self. And the rather may we be allowed to conclude this from our present Text, because 'tis said of Man, *He fleeth as a Shadow*; and then 'tis added too, *He continueth not*. From this Text then it appears, we may learn these three Intimations.

1. The present Life of mortal Man is very short, as is the continuance of a Flower.

2. It is very feeble and frail; is most easily cut off and destroyed, and yet is exposed too, as the Flower of the Field.

3. This our present Life in this World is altogether transitory; it is continually passing away: As a Shadow always moves and passes on, till it is lost in the Night's Universal Darkneſs.

These are very obvious Truths, and such as every Man's Thoughts may easily suggest to him: And they are very important and worth our considering, and would be to those that would well consider them the Springs of much Peace and Wisdom. But as obvious and useful as they are, it appears they are much neglected, and Men commonly live, as if they knew not these Things: At least 'tis certain they seldom or never consider them. Let us then not be unwilling to fix our Minds upon them for a little while at present, and let none fear any harm will follow, if thereby they should make impression upon his Mind, and for the future so stay there as never to be forgotten again.

The next Thing then, that I proposed to do is, to illustrate these Particulars; to express and speak of them in a few more Words, on purpose that our Thoughts may be detained a while upon them: And that we may give them some Advantage to make a due Impression,

1. Let us consider, That the present Life of mortal Man is very short. They that live the greatest Number of Years, have but a short Life on Earth. A little time passes over the Innocence and Ease of our Infancy and Childhood: A little more withers the flourishing Beauty and Gayety of Youth: A little more weakens the Strength, and spends the Usefulness of riper Manhood. And if beyond this we live, a little time more buries the Decays and Infirmities of Old-age. The longest distance from the Cradle to the Grave, is but a short one. And the Wisdom of God would have Mankind sensible of this; therefore it is often suggested to us in Scripture. This Chapter, (Verse 1.) says, *Man that is born of a Woman is of few Days. Few and Evil* (says Jacob) *have the Days of the Years of my Life been*; after he had lived an hundred and thirty Years, Gen. 47. 9. Well then might the Psalmist say, *If our Strength lasts to fourscore Years, yet it is soon cut off*, as Psal. 90. 10.

But we shall have the best and most lively Apprehension of the contemptible Shortness of Human Life, if we compare the Continuance of that with the duration of some other Things. There are many of the Creatures made inferiour to us, that yet now commonly live much longer than we. Naturalists tell us, That some sorts of Birds commonly live an hundred Years; when, alas, not one in many hundreds of us can reach to near that Age. Of some Trees it is said, they will live eight hundred Years. Many of our own Works abide and continue much longer than we. We contrive them for our own Advantage and Comfort, and

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and in a little time leave them we know not to whom. We live in Houses, we meet in Churches, that were built by we know not who; we read Books written by Men that have been dead perhaps many hundred Years ago. If we consider the more abiding Parts of the Creation; how much longer do they last than we, whom they were made to serve. *One Generation goes, and another comes* (says the Preacher) *but the Earth abides for ever.* The Expression does not mean that this Earth shall never be dissolv'd; and there are other Scriptures which intimate that it shall; but it teaches us, that while the Earth abides, and has done so for several thousands of Years, a great many Generations of Men have successively been upon it. For a while it has fed, and then devoured them: A while they have had a Portion here, and then resign'd it to others, and they after a little while have resign'd it again to others; no Man can carry any of these Things away with him. How many Lives has the Course of this one Sun measured, and yet the Sun continues to run his Race. Above five thousand Years has that bright Creature been a burning and shining Light, when alas *we are but as of Yesterday*, as *Job* speaks, Chap. 8. Ver. 9. And how much longer after us the Earth, and the Sun, and the Heavens may last, we know not. But if they should last much longer, as we may have reason to think they will not last always) there are yet another sort of Beings of a longer duration. The Angels which were made above five thousand Years ago, shall continue for ever; they shall know no end of duration, nor alteration of their blest and happy Condition: Their Duration is not transitory, their Condition is not frail and feeble. But in the last Place, let us consider the infinite and everlasting Duration of the Ever-blessed God: *He is from Everlasting to Everlasting*, as is said, *Psalms* 90. 2. He always was, and never had Beginning, always is, and shall be, and never shall be at an End. Oh how justly may we despise (considering

these Things) the contemptible Shortness of our present Life. The Psalmist says to God, *A thousand Years in thy sight, are but as yesterday when it is past.* Which is as if he should say, If we wretched Mortals should be continued in the World for a longer time than any of the first Men liv'd, who liv'd some of them near a thousand Years, yet this were very little to thy unmeasurable Duration. The longest Life of Man is as inconsiderable to thee, as one past Day is to us. Yea, it is as little as a Watch in the Night, he adds; as three or four Hours spent in sleep. And very fitly is this Matter exprest yet farther, to make us duly sensible of it, *Psalm 39. 5. Behold my Days are as an Hand-breadth.* The four short Stages of Man's Life are but each of them as it were the breadth of a Finger in their length; and yet farther, *Mine Age is as nothing before thee:* The greatest Number of our Years is so small it is as nothing when compar'd with thy Eternal Duration.

Thus we may help our selves duly to apprehend the Shortness of our present Life.

2. Let us consider, That this our present Life is very frail and feeble. As the Flower is the shortest liv'd Part of a Plant, so 'tis usually the weakest, the most easily wither'd and destroy'd. A cold Wind pinches and blasts it, a high one tears it in Pieces; a hot Sun shrivels and withers it; a little Flie or Worm can easily destroy a thing of so delicate and tender a Constitution. And so frail as this, is the Life of Man: There is not the weakest Flower more weak than he. The strongest Man may be kill'd by a Flie or an Hair, a Crum of Bread, a Blast of ill Air, or a few Drops of Drink. Even the weakest and most contemptible Creature that is, can put an end to his Days, when 'tis commissioned by the Providence of God to do so. And we are liable to a great many mortal Accidents, any of which can cut us off in the Prime of our Years, when we are proud of Youth and Strength: As *Job* says, *Some die in their full*

full Strength, when their Breasts are full of Milk, and their Bones are moistned with Marrow, Job 21. 23, 24. Our greatest Strength is but Weakness. How often has the Sun risen upon a Man alive and well, and promising himself many Days, and before his setting has seen him a dead Carcass? Again, We may apprehend the frailty of our present Life from hence, we all breed in our selves the Causes of Death. A great many Distempers are our mortal Bodies liable to, and we carry the Seeds of them in our selves. And we may say there are some Diseases which the Excess of Health and Vigour dispose Men to, some that kill only the Young or Strong, as a Consumption or a Fever. But that Constitution must needs be acknowledged frail which breeds its own Destruction; and this is the common Case of Mankind in our present State. And yet farther will the Frailty of this Life be presented to us, if we consider the unavoidable Decays of Old-age. If without Accidents and in despite of Distempers we pass through Childhood, and Youth, and Manhood; yet in Old-age Nature decays of it self. If nothing else destroys us, we shall like the weak Flower fade, and fall alone. The crazy Building may be propt a while, but it will tumble at last, let what will be done to support it. And this ought sure to be reckoned a very frail thing which will fall of it self, and perish if it be let alone. And much rather yet should we account it so, if it will fail and perish, notwithstanding the greatest Care and the best Means that can be used to preserve it. And this is the miserable Condition of our present Life.

3. Let us farther take Notice and consider, That this present Life is altogether transitory. The Life of Man *fleeth as a Shadow, and continueth not.* We may think it stays with us, but it does not; it continually passes away. Every Shadow is in continual Motion, as the Sun that makes it does constantly move. And so this short Life is continually passing away; it

never makes one Moment's stop. And surely that which is but short, and yet is continually passing, must needs be quickly gone : *We have here no continuing City*, the Scripture tells us, *Heb. 13. 14.* *We are but Pilgrims and Strangers on Earth*, *Heb. 11. 13.* We cannot have here a settled abiding State. That we may the better apprehend how transitory our Life is, let us fix our Eye sometimes, or our Thoughts at present, upon a rapid and violent Stream. As in a River one Wave thrusts on another, and while we look on, still new Water succeeds to our view ; so one Year, one Day, one Moment thrusts on and succeeds another. This Day will not stay with us any more than all that are gone before us. Let us consider, that whatever we are doing, Life spends and waists its self ; precious time is spent, whatever else we save or get. While we work, while we sleep, Life goes on : If we are busie, if we are idle, it will not stay for us, but passes away. Our Life passes like a Shadow, with a very silent and unheeded Pace, but a very steady and constant one. And thus indeed it comes to pass, that it steals away from a great many of us. It is gone e'er we are aware of it. While we are promising our selves what we will do for our own Advantage and Comfort hereafter, while we are expecting what the *time to come* will do for us, the *time to come* is some of it come and gone : This *time to come* grows every Day less and less. Time flies away, we cannot hold it, and when 'tis gone will never be recalled : We can neither keep it with us, nor bring it back again. All the Art and Skill of Philosophy and Physick is not able to make an old Man young. We may redeem Time by a wise and diligent Improvement of that we have, but can never recal it. And that must needs be reckon'd a very transitory Thing, which is always spending and passing, and will never recover or return. This Life we shall never live over again when it is once gone ; this we cannot hope for ; tho' we may hope for or fear another.

I think

I think enough is now said to illustrate the Three Particulars contained in our Text,

I shall therefore proceed in the last Place to mention and urge the Improvement and Use we ought to make of them. This I shall divide into Two Parts, to direct our Behaviour hereby both towards this World and the next. For some important Instructions regarding both, may be derived from these Particulars.

Let us see first what Behaviour they require of us relating to this World. This you may observe in the following Particulars.

1. Since the Case is thus with us in this World, it should make our Desires towards all things here, very moderate and regular. It cannot be worth our while to be very much concern'd about Matters that we shall not long have any thing to do with. It is very foolish to let our Thoughts abide and fix where we our selves cannot. Since this Life is frail, and short, and yet transitory too, this utterly forbids us to engage all our Thoughts about it, to let it employ all our Care, to suffer all our Wishes and Endeavours and our whole Soul to pursue any thing here. It forbids an eager and uneasy Concern for any thing that we have not. 'Tis unreasonable to pine and grieve much for the want of that which I could but a little while enjoy: Since we cannot possess any of these things but a very little while, we must be long without them; and should content and satisfy our selves that we may not be uneasy under an inevitable Necessity. Say to your self, If I cannot be a few Days without such a thing, how shall I do to be many Years without it; as I must be all the while that my Body shall lie in the Grave, and my Soul be separated from this World? How shall I bear to be for ever without it, as I must be when all this World shall be dissolv'd, and the Enjoyments of it at an end? This farther forbids all

our

our Anxiety and solicitude about the time to come; some hardly enjoy what they are and have at present, by reason of their Care and fear about what may be hereafter. The time to come cannot be a long time, when 'tis but part of a short Life. And let every Man think with himself; while I am solicitous about the Remainder of my Days, they grow still fewer and fewer, and so I have still the less reason for my care about them.

Farther; This should effectually restrain Men from all ill Ways of seeking the Conveniences of this present Life. We desire That too much, whatever it is, that we resolve to obtain by any Means. All the Happiness this World can afford, is not worthy of such a Desire. And he pays too dear for the best Enjoyments of this World, who purchases them at the Cost of his Innocence. *Treasures gotten by Wickedness profit not.* He that allows himself to be wicked that he may accomplish his Desires, loses much to gain a little: He forfeits the True Happiness to gain a false one: For transitory Satisfaction, he abdicates abiding Pleasures: He loses Eternal Goods, to gain Temporal; and incurs everlasting Misery for the sake of a very short, and transient, and small Felicity. What Proportion can there be between the Joys of Heaven, which are most Pure and Ravishing, most Satisfying and Eternal, and the short Flashes of Delight and Pleasure which this World affords? Or what Recompence can these feeble and short Pleasures make for the exposing our selves to the most exquisite and eternal Torments: Nothing then can be so foolish and unreasonable as the guilty Pursuit of the Things of this World.

2. The Shortness and Frailty of this present Life may teach us, to use with Sobriety and Temperance the Enjoyments of this World. A quite contrary use I know is made of this Consideration by too many, but how absurdly and foolishly, will appear upon a very little
little

little Consideration. They allow themselves the most excessive Gratifications of their Appetites in Gluttony, Drunkenness and Uncleaness: Yea, they endeavour and study to enflame their Appetites, and make them immoderate and excessive, that they may have the more Pleasure in gratifying them; and because they can live but a little while, they will live apace. But unless the Way were a great deal longer to the Grave than it is, methinks there is no need to hurry thither: There is no reason to live out a short Life apace. Thus they shorten the Life, which would not be very long without this Precipitant haste. They drive away that which they would keep, and which is going away of it self. They make haste to put an end to that which above all things they dote upon, that is, Sensual Pleasure; to disable themselves from enjoying it by Diseases or an untimely Death. Intemperance and Excess bring the Infirmities, and Aches, and Defects of Old Age upon Youth, and kill Men in the prime of their Days, almost as soon as they come to enjoy the World, and know what it is to live. Is this the Wit of the World, or rather a Madness? A wise Man would use with Care a frail and brittle thing, especially if he does highly esteem and value it. Is it reasonable to wish for a long Enjoyment of the Pleasures of this Life, and to take a Course at the same time to make it short? To dote on Pleasures and spoil them? To place all our Happiness in this Life, and make haste to end it? To be prodigal of a small Stock, and use ruggedly and carelessly a weak thing? If this be Wit, there is nothing can deserve the Name of Folly.

3. These disparaging Properties of this present Life should teach Men to be humble in their greatest worldly Prosperity. It may and ought to serve to this purpose to consider; Whatever I have now, it is but a little while ago that I receiv'd it: Naked I
came

came, not long since, into this World : I have but a very little while been Honour'd, or Rich, or Learned ; and e'er long I must cease to be what I am : I must go out of this World quickly, and go as naked (at least of all outward Advantages) as I was when I came into it : All that I have then here is but a transitory Portion : My best Estate is Vanity, which is built upon so flight a Foundation as this feeble Life. Alas, I cannot have here a stable-abiding Felicity, while my Life is moving and passing away. And if I can enjoy what I have till I die, that is the longest I shall do so, and that cannot be long. Then the poor Beggar will be as rich as the most Wealthy : And there will be as much Beauty, as much Strength in his Dust, who was deform'd and weak, as in that of those who are proud of Beauty, or Strength ; no Marks of Wisdom or Learning will remain about the dead and corrupted Carcass : All Sorts are huddled together, equall'd and confounded in the Grave. The Man that is proud of his present Advantages, may assure himself, that within a few Days he may be as despicable on Earth as any that he despises. Yea, in a little time he shall be more despicable, and made inferiour to him, if the other out-lives him. If the Rich and Honour'd dies first, the poor Man remains Richer and more Honourable than he : As a *Living Dog is better than a Dead Lion*. The one enjoys still his Little, and the other is totally stript of his Abundance. Should I despise any Man (let me say) when a little time may make so great a Difference to his Advantage ? When he whom I disdain perhaps to speak to, may shortly tread upon me, and have me under the Dust of his Feet ? Surely this frail and transitory Life, with all its Advantages, is too mean a thing to cause or allow a Man to be proud of it.

4. These Conditions of our present Life, may justly render us patient under all our present Adversity: May we not with great Reason bear that patiently, which we cannot endure long; especially when the more patient we are under grievous Things, the more easie and tolerable they be? Let us consider then, when any Affliction befalls us, I cannot undergoe a long Affliction in a short Life. If Poverty be my Lot, I shall not long be expos'd to the Inconveniences of that. If I am condemned to a Life of hard Labour and Toil, I may comfort my self with this Thought, That I am hastning to a Place where the *Weary are at Rest*. If I am vexed and afflicted by the Lusts and Passions of unreasonable and wicked Men; I may consider their Life is frail and transitory as well as mine; and I am going to be where the *Wicked cease from troubling*. In all Adversity this may comfort us, My Afflictions are fading and transitory, as I am; the Evil, as well as the Good Things of this Life, can last no longer than my self, and that will not be long.

Such as these are the Thoughts, Dispositions, and Resolutions relating to this World, that these Conditions of our present Life should excite in us. The Apostle Paul urges such a use of these things, 1 Cor. 7. 29, 30, 31. *Brethren, the time is short; It remains, that they which have Wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoyce, as though they rejoyced not; and they that use this World, as not abusing it; for the Fashion of this World passeth away.*

I proceed now to the last Part of the Discourse, with which I shall soon conclude; that is, To represent the due Behaviour relating to the other World, which these Disparagements of our present Life should teach and provoke us to.

And

And I cannot imagine but that every one will readily acknowledge these Things should make us turn our Thoughts towards the World to come, and look into the Reality and Nature of a future State; and earnestly endeavour to secure to our selves a happy Condition there: Since there is most certainly another World and a Life to come; is it not our Wisdom to think of it, and look before us; especially when we are continually hastening to it? When I am going apace from this World, shall I not think at all whither I am going? Is not this worth a Thought?

Let us consider what the Scripture teaches us of the future State: That it assures our Souls to be Immortal; though our Bodies perish, They shall never die; and our perishing Bodies shall lie but a while in their dissolved State: They shall certainly rise again from the Dust to live hereafter in immortal Life: That we shall be raised to receive the Rewards of our Doings here, whether they have been Good or Bad: That the Eternal World to come is divided into Two different States; The one perfectly happy for the Reward of Good Men; The other perfectly miserable for the Punishment of the Bad.

Since these Things will certainly be, let us certainly expect them and frequently think of them: Let every one often tell himself, This short Life is hastening to end in an endless Life. I am going where I shall be happy or miserable for ever; from transitory to abiding Things, from Temporal to Eternal. Whatever puts an end to this frail Life, which is so easily destroy'd, sends me into an unalterable State, whatever sort it be of: If a happy one, it will ever be happy, and perfectly so; if miserable, it will always be a perfectly miserable State: And my Condition there will be ordered according to my Behaviour

viour here: This short Life has an Influence upon the Eternal One. If I have lived well, and well used the Talents I was entrusted with here, I shall enjoy better and more lasting good Things there: I may justly content my self to be denied any of these Things below, if the wise Disposer sees fit to do so; since better Things to full Satisfaction are reserved for me. But if I live wickedly, I must expect that a little time will put an end for ever to all my present Ease and Prosperity; I must part with all my lov'd Enjoyments, and bid a Farewel to all Mirth and Pleasure. All my Portion of Good is in this World, and I can enjoy it no longer than while this short and transitory Life lasts. It is but a small Portion of Good then that falls to my Share, if this be all I must have. And it was not worth the being born, to be exposed to so many Evils, to bear so many Afflictions, to feel the Wrackings of so many violent Passions, as this Mortal Life and Vale of Tears are acquainted with, for the sake of enjoying so little Good, so short and small a Felicity. And besides, my pleasant Circumstances here, will quickly end in Torments and Miseries that will continue for ever. Let us, I say, think much of that other World, and divert our Thoughts from this: That so our Affections may be disengaged, and we may not be entangled with the Charms and Allurements of this World, to our everlasting Perdition. And having got our selves at liberty from those fatal Snare and Fetters; let us earnestly apply our selves to prepare for, and secure a happy State in the Life to come. This ought to be our greatest Care in this World, and employ the most of our Endeavours. In every other Care and Endeavour this should be minded, and should direct them. We should so pursue this World, as at the same time to pursue a better; and so enjoy this World, as that we at the same time may hope for a better. Ought

we not to be most concerned, that we may be happy there, where we must be longest? Let us behave our selves always in this World, as going out of this, and going into another, where we shall abide and stay. Shall we be careful about a few Days to come of this Life, and not much rather be solicitous what will become of us to all Eternity?

Now to secure our Happiness hereafter, we must endeavour to make our Peace with God; to regain his Favour, by repenting truly of our former Sins; by stedfastly purposing to lead a new Life; by devoting our selves to Jesus Christ, to be Followers of him, with whom the Father was well-pleased. We must then *deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World.* We must cease to do Evil, and learn to do Well; and follow after Holiness; without which no Man can see God; no Man can be admitted into that Presence of God which makes Heaven. Let us endeavour to grow reconciled to a very Serious and Religious Life; to become acquainted with, and to relish the Joys and Pleasures of Devotion and Communion with God: To delight in him, in meditating on his Nature and Works, in praising, adoring and worshipping of him. Which things will be the great Entertainment and Happiness of Heaven; and therefore till we are suited to such Things, till we can find the highest Pleasure in them, and in all Acts of Vertue, till we can satisfie our selves in such things, even with the want of many worldly Enjoyments, we are not fit for Heaven, nor can be happy in another World.

But thus to prepare our selves for, and secure a happy State hereafter, is the best use we can possibly put this our mean Life to. And though this Life be

so short and transitory, we shall have time enough for the securing a better, if we do not cheat our selves of it by unnecessary Delays, and if we apply our selves diligently to this Matter. And how great an Improvement of our present Life is this! How great a Gain! How much to Advantage! To employ this Life for the gaining a happy One hereafter, is as if a Man should lay out Pebbles for Pearls; should exchange Dirt for Gold, and short-liv'd Sparkles for lasting and glorious Stars: 'Tis to lay out Earth for Heaven; to spend time for the Purchase of Eternity; to use the Creatures so, as to make them bring us to God; to labour for a very few Days, that we may enjoy an Eternal Rest; to deny our selves in a few things, and for a little while, that we may e'er long enjoy full Satisfaction, everlasting Pleasures. This is truly and greatly to redeem our Time; This, if we do, we shall not regret that our Time on Earth was so short and transitory.

God grant us the Grace so to number our Days here, as that we may apply our Hearts to True Wisdom; for the sake of Jesus Christ: To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory world without end. Amen.

THE
PRAYER.

O Eternal and Almighty God, Thou art always the same, and Thy Years do not fail: Thou art the same Yesterday, and to Day, and for ever, without Variableness or Shadow of Change. It is upon Thee, O Lord, and Thy unchangeable Power, that all Things else do depend, in their Beings and in all their Operations; Thou fillest Heaven and Earth, and Thou workest all in all. We, O Lord, are amongst the Number of those whom Thou hast created, and dost preserve; Thou, in Thy due time, didst bring us into Being at our Birth, and by Thee we are hitherto sustained. It is Thou that supportest our frail Natures, that they fall not into the Dust; by Thy careful Providence over us, we have escaped many Dangers, we have got through the Weakness of Infancy, and the heedlessness of Childhood; by Thy Blessing has our Food nourish'd, and our Cloaths warmed us, for we live not by these Things alone, but by the Word which proceeds out of the Mouth of God. We are in Thy Hands then; O Thou the Sovereign Arbiter of Life and Death! Whenever Thou pleasest, we return to the Dust from whence we were created. We acknowledge it is of Thy Mercy that we are not consumed, and because Thy Compassions fail not. Thou hast supported and protected our frail Lives amidst innumerable Dangers, while we have liv'd careless of our Duties to Thee, while we have liv'd in Rebellion against Thee. Had Thy Wrath been kindled against us but for a Moment, which we have continually provoked, we had perished irrecoverably. Oh how great and wonderful is Thy Patience and Goodness in continuing, and supporting, and watching over such provoking Sinners! We admire, we praise Thee for Thy Long-Suffering towards us; and since Thou hast given space to do it, we repent of all our past Sins; we purpose and desire to lead a new and good Life, and we humbly sue for Thy Pardoning Mercy. When we with
Sorrow

Sorrow and Shame confess our Sins, do Thou, we pray Thee, forgive our Sins, and cleanse us from all Unrighteousness. Give us Grace to amend our Lives according to Thy Holy Word. Teach us, that denying all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we may live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World, spending the rest of our Days to Thy Honour and Glory. In this Way make us to seek an Inheritance in the World to come, that since we have here no long Abode, no certain Duration, no abiding State, we may have a Treasure in Heaven, an Inheritance in the next World, that fadeth not away. Make us so sensible of the short and uncertain Condition of this our present Life, that our Affections may be wean'd from this World, and set upon the Things to come; teach and enable us so to pass through Things Temporal, that we finally lose not the Things that are Eternal.

We pray Thee, let not this Day be utterly lost to us, but give us Comfort and good Fruit of our Attendances upon Thee; O let Thy Ordinances be to us, the Means of a glorious and eternal Life. Grant us to lie down this Night in Peace, while Thou makest us to dwell safely: Let our Waking-Thoughts in the Night-Season instruct us. Give us cause in the Morning to rejoyce in Thy Goodness; and, Lord, comfort this our wretched mortal Life with Thy Blessings; that we may see and rejoyce in Thy Goodness in the Land of the Living.

We beseech Thee, to have Mercy on all Men; Grant them to know Thee, the only True God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent to their eternal Salvation. Save Thy People, O Lord, and bless thine Heritage; govern and lift them up for ever. We pray Thee, bless these Nations wherein we live: Be Thou as a Wall of Fire round about us, and our Defence against all Thine Enemies and ours. O purge and cleanse us from our Sins, that we may be meet for the Favours of Thy Providence. Grant our most Gracious Queen a long and happy Reign over us; give Her great Prosperity and Peace. Let our Royal Family continue before Thee so long as the Sun and Moon shall endure, and be eminent Instruments of Thy Glory, and the Welfare of these Nations. Direct all our Magistrates, so to govern themselves in their several Places, as may be to Thy Glory, the Good of Thy Church among us, and to the Safety, Honour and Welfare of Her Majesty and Her Kingdoms. Teach all our

People duly to fear Thee, to be subject and obedient to those that are over them in Church or State, and to live in brotherly Love and Unity one among another. We humbly recommend to Thy Goodness, O Father of Mercies, all that are in any Trouble or Affliction; give them Patience and Submission to Thee, and in due time deliver them. We pray Thee bless all our Friends and Relations: do good to our Enemies, and make them to be at Peace with us. All this we humbly ask in the Name of Jesus Christ; and farther whatever He Himself hath taught us to pray, saying,

OUR Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this Day our daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into Temptation: But deliver us from Evil. Amen.

THE
USEFULNESS
OF
EARLY RELIGION
TO
OLD-AGE,
DEMONSTRATED.

Let us Pray:

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works begun, continued and ended in thee, we may glorifie thy Holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain Everlasting Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Ecclef. 12. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

Notwithstanding the great Uncertainty of Humane Life, and though none of us can tell how short his appointed Time may be: Though we see Persons of every Age descend into the Grave, some in

their early Infancy, and some in Youth in their full Strength, as well as some in an Old Age : Yea, (which is very strange) though we see that a great many more die young, than there are that live to any great Age ; yet do Mankind commonly promise themselves a long Life on Earth. All expect this almost, though but few attain it. We believe, that we may live as long as the oldest Persons that we see or know of. And this vain Imagination proves a fatal and mischievous Snare to a great many. For, because they may live long, as they think, they will not trouble themselves betimes to prepare to die, though it is as true that they may not live long : They set the Practice of Religion and the Concern of their Souls aside for the present, because they shall have, as they suppose, time enough to mind them hereafter. They apply themselves wholly now to the Business and Pleasures of this Life, and refer their Reformation and Religion to Old Age. And thus while they think they have much time to spend, they squander away, and lose much from their main Concern ; and with their Time they lose Eternity and their Souls too : Their Time is spent, and their Day of Salvation is over, before they have secured and wrought out their Salvation : And Death snatches many of them away in the midst of their worldly Cares and Pleasures, and so they are undone for ever.

To meet with and cure, if it may be, this Error, I shall insist a little upon these Words of *Solomon* : Wherein he intimates the Unreasonableness and Folly of delaying to Repent, and be Religious, till Old Age, though it be supposed that we may, or though it could be certain that we shall live to Old Age.

We may reckon, that the latter Part of this *Verse* is a Reason and Argument to enforce his Advice in the former Part of it ; and that his meaning is this :
Remem-

Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, because the latter end of a long Life will be *Evil Days*, and such as you shall say, *I have no Pleasure in them.* To be Religious in Youth will be the best Preparation against the Evil Days to come, and in those Days you will need those Consolations and Advantages which a Religious and Vertuous Course that has been before them will then afford. Many other Arguments are commonly insisted upon by those that handle this Text, to persuade young Persons to mind Religion and Vertue; but I shall set them all aside, and insist upon this alone, which seems chiefly, if not only intended in the Text.

To do this with the better Success (if it may please God) I shall divide the following Discourse into Three Parts.

I. To shew what is meant by *Remembring our Creator in the Days of our Youth*: Because 'tis usually thought that Youth may be allowed a great deal of Liberty, and that a very little Religion may serve their turn.

II To shew, that the time of Old Age is That he means here by the *Evil Days*, and the Years in which a Man shall say, he has *no Pleasure in them*; for to illustrate this Matter is to strengthen the Argument.

III. To shew how this is a good Argument and Reason against Mens putting off their Repenting and being Religious to their Old Age; and that the Best Defence and Preparation that we can possibly make against the Inconveniences of that time, is to be Religious in our Youth.

I begin with the first of these: To shew what is meant by *Remembring our Creator in the Days of our Youth.*

By *Creator* then, we are to understand he means God that made us; for it is He *that hath made us, and not we our selves,* Psal. 100. 3.

By *Remembring Him*, we must understand these Particulars are intended.

1. That we seek and get a good Measure of the Knowledge of God. No Man can remember Him at all, that does not know something of Him. Nor can any Man remember what He is, unless he does in some measure know this; and we must remember Him such as He is, or we shall not do it to any good purpose. We must therefore betimes enquire into what He has revealed of Himself in His Word. We must know and remember that He is, and is a Rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. That He is a Being, Infinite, Eternal, Good and Just, Wise and Almighty. That He is our Creator, and the Creator of all Things; and He is thereupon the Lord and Owner of all, as He says, *The World is mine and the fulness thereof,* Psalm 50. 12. *And we are his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture,* as the Psalmist speaks, Psalm 100. We must know and remember, that He has laid His Laws upon us, and expects our Obedience to them; that He is Judge of all the Earth, and will render to every Man according to his Works.

Thus we must remember Him in what He is in Himself, and in what Relations He is pleased to bear towards us.

2. 'Tis also intended herein, That we should often think of God; that we should have Him much in our Minds; that we *set the Lord always before us,* as the Psalmist speaks of himself, Psalm 16. 8. It is the Character of an Evil Man, That *God is not in all*

all his Thoughts, and of every wicked People, that *they forget God*. Men may actually think of God often in the midst of their Worldly Business, and may habitually acknowledge Him in all their Ways; they may and ought to depend upon His Providence, thank Him for all they enjoy, praise Him for and ascribe to Him all the Good they do. We should begin and end every Day, and receive every Meal with actual Thoughts of God, and serious Addresses to Him of Praise and Thanksgiving. We should duly set apart His Sabbaths, to remember and worship Him upon them.

3. This includes also suitable Affections of the Heart: Our Knowledge must not be Speculative and Unaffecting: We must think of God with awful Reverence and Fear of His Majesty and Greatness: We must love Him above all Things, and desire His Favour and Love as our chiefest Good: We must admire and delight in His Holiness, Justice, and Goodness, and endeavour to conform to them.

4. This includes Obedience to His Commands, and Resignation and Submission to His Providence. This is due to Him, and is the just Acknowledgment of His Right in us. His Laws must be the Rule of our Actions, and His Glory our Great End; as the Apostle says, *1 Corinth. 10. 11. Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the Glory of God*: And whatever Portion or Fortune he allots us, we must take with an humble, contented, and resigned Frame of Spirit, as sensible that He disposes but of His own in His ordering of us, and our Circumstances: We must be ready always after our Great Pattern to say, *Lord, not what I will, but what thou wilt*.

Thus much is included in the Word *Remember*.

And

And all this is to be done in our early Youth, according to the Wise Man's Advice here : As soon as possibly we can do it ; without any delay or putting it off. We should with the first Exercises of our Reason, study and learn to know Him and His Laws : With the first Actions of our Wills, we should chuse Him for our chief Good, and His Laws as our best Rule ; and make it our great Care and Endeavour to conform to them, rather than to the Customs, and Fashions, and Maxims of the foolish and wicked World ; And we should set our first Affections on Him, give Him our Hearts, before the Things of this World have gotten possession of them.

This is that which Solomon advises.

Let us now proceed to consider that which is his Argument to urge this Advice : That is, That *Evil Days will come, and the Years in which a Man shall say, he has no pleasure in them.* That this is spoken of Old Age, appears by the following Verses, wherein 'tis generally acknowledged he describes that Age of Human Life ; and indeed the Description he makes of it, does justify his giving it the Name of *Evil Days*, as he seems to have designed to do. I shall give the Sum of what he says to this purpose in the following Particulars.

1. That is an Evil Time upon the account of the Weakness and Decay of Nature, which often attends it. There is then a great Decay of all the Faculties and Powers ; the Mortal Body begins to fail : The Beauty of it is withered, the Strength exhausted. The dim Eye can no longer see, nor the deaf Ear hear ; the feeble Feet cannot walk, nor the Hands work as they could before. And in this Weakness the Limbs which were strong and vigorous, become a burthen to themselves : The old Man cannot help himself, but descends perhaps to the Weakness of

of a Child again. Thus is he taken from Action and Business; That which made him taken notice of and considerable in the World, that which made him sought to and respected. And now perhaps he sees himself forgotten and forsaken; he sees those he has been kind to, prove ungrateful, and those whom he has nourished and brought up, grown weary of him. And where these Things are, who would not account the time which that Man continues farther an Evil Time?

2. But farther: It often attends this Decay of Nature, that they are loaded with Pains and Distempers. These whenever they come are an heavy Burthen, even to those who are young and strong, and therefore they will much rather be so to the aged and weak; and these are more liable to them than younger Persons. Indeed if Pains and Distempers are very violent upon Old Age, they are not of long continuance, because weak Nature cannot then bear much: Yet they are very uneasie sometimes, and of long continuance too. The Old Person is oftentimes attended with the yearly Returns of very painful Distempers; which give him perhaps some Intermissions for a little while, but 'tis only to let him gain so much strength as to be able to endure and rub through the more Returning Fits of them. He shall feel the smart of former Wounds, and the Aches and Pains of old Bruises, and the stiffness and weariness of former Labours. Sicknes confines him to his House or his Chamber, and makes him a Prisoner at Home. Pain wearies out his Days, and makes him wish for the Night: And when the Night has continued a while, he wishes again for the Day: He has no Comfort in his Days, nor Rest in the Nights. The remainder of Comfort and Pleasure, which Weakness and Decay had left, Sicknes and Pain utterly ravish away. Therefore,

3. It must be mentioned as another Inconvenience of Old Age, that it is with many, a time very destitute of Pleasure. The Old Man has but a very weak and languid Sense at the most of all the pleasant Things of this World : The *Desire* now *fails*, as *Solomon* says, *Verse 5.* The Senses and Appetites grow dull, and have less Relish of these Things : The dim Eye is no more ravish'd with beautiful Objects ; nor is the deaf Ear to be charmed with harmonious Sounds : The Nose and Palate are hardly sensible any longer of pleasing Tastes or Smells. *Can I discern between Good and Evil ?* says Old *Barzillai* to *David*. *Can thy Servant taste what I eat or what I drink ? Can I hear any more the Voice of singing Men, and singing Women ?* 2 Sam. 19. 35. The Novelty of Things which helped to transport him in younger Years is now no more attending them, he can meet with nothing new, but is cloy'd and sick with the dull Repetitions of the same Things.

4. It is a great Addition to the Evil of these Days, that if any Affliction or Inconvenience befalls us then, it is usually more incurable, than in our younger Years it might have been. *Man is born to Trouble, as the Sparks fly upwards.* Afflictions will haunt and molest us, as long as we live in this mutable, weak and exposed State ; and that Condition of Life, which renders our Afflictions most incurable, renders them also the most grievous and troublesome : When our Condition is hopeless as well as inconvenient, this more than doubles the Grief of that Inconvenience ; and this is commonly the unhappy Case of Old Age. If a Man be then sickly, he cannot expect ever to recover or enjoy a good State of Health again ; if one Distemper be cured, it turns into another. He that is deprived of his Children then, cannot hope to have more, as poor *Naomi* complain'd. If then he falls into Poverty, he must lie under

under it, and bear all the sorrowful Attendants of that, for he is now weak and incapable of that Industry which should help him: He wants more than he did in younger Years, and is less able to take Pains to get it.

5. Lastly, That which farther helps to make Old Age an Evil Time, is the certain Approach and Nearness of Death. It is known then, that this cannot be far off: His miserable Days will shortly end in Dissolution; from his sick Bed he must go e're long to his cold Grave, and be a long Prisoner there: His best Days are irrecoverably gone, and he shall never return to the Health and Vigour, the Mirth and Jollity of Youth again. The certainty of Death, is the Great and Uncomfortable Disparagement of the present Life. In all our Mirth it damps us to think of it. It troubles our best Days, it chills our warmest Blood, it sours our sweetest Delights, to have a serious Thought that we must die. It affrights us to think, I must e'er long be cold and senseless, I must be a gasty Object to those who have the most delighted to see me: Those I most love will hasten to bury me out of their sight; they will commit me to Worms and Rottenness: I must lie down in Darkness and Oblivion; Worms must feed on me, and the Winds e're long scatter my contemptible Dust. I must leave all the pleasant Things I have here, and go into a new, an unknown World, from whence none come back to tell what is there. These are sad and very painful Thoughts, to him that puts this Evil farthest from him. But with how much the more force must these Things strike and wound, when they are certainly near? And to the aged Person these Things must be near. They may indeed be as near to the youngest here present, as to the oldest, but it may also be said, they may not be near such; but it cannot

cannot be said, they may not be near them that are aged. Death with his fatal Dart is almost ready to strike them : Their Day is come to the Evening, and therefore they cannot be far from Night : Their Glass is almost run, and shall never be turned up again, and therefore must soon be out.

This also then may make Old Age an Evil Time.

And this is the Time to which many Men incline to put off their living well : But whether they do wisely in this or no, will be best determined after we have well consider'd what is to be said on the Third Head of Discourse; wherein I doubt not to make appear, as was propos'd, That the best Defence and Preparation we can possibly make against these *Evil Days*, is to begin a Religious and Vertuous Course betimes, and to continue in it all our Days before this Time. This the Light of Nature taught a wise and thinking Heathen (*Cicero de Senect.*) who speaks thus, *Aptissima omnino arma senectutis, &c.* The best Weapons and Defences of Old Age against the Inconveniences it is liable to, are the Arts and the Exercises of Vertues : Which being cultivated through every Age of Life before, if we happen to live long, will then bring forth wonderful Fruits : Not only (says he) because they will never desert us, no not to the extreme Point of Life, though that be very considerable; but also because the consciousness of a well-spent Life, and the Remembrance of many Good and Vertuous Actions are highly pleasant to us. Thanks be to God we can say this upon much better Grounds than the Heathens could; and then the Argument ought to have the more force upon us.

To make it appear, That a Religious and Vertuous Life before, is the best Preparation and Defence
that

that we can possibly make against the Evils that attend Old Age, I shall insist upon these two Particulars.

1. This will in a great measure prevent some of the Evils to which that Part of Life is liable: And to the virtuous and good Man it shall not be so Evil as to another.

2. It will greatly alleviate those which it does not prevent, and soften them with very effectual Consolations.

In the First Place, To have liv'd a Religious and Vertuous Life from our Youth, will in a great measure prevent some of the Evils that Old Age is liable to.

A virtuous and temperate Course of Life in our younger Years, gets a good Habit of Health, and settles and confirms a good Constitution. Temperance and Vertue cherish Nature, but violent Passions and Vices weaken and destroy it. He who governs himself wisely, and according to the Rules of Religion in his Labours, and Enjoyments, and Conversations, takes that Course which tends to preserve his Health and Life. Such Persons are the most likely to live to an Old Age, as *Solomon* tells us, when he says of the Wisdom of good Living, *Length of Days is in her Right Hand*; and such are most likely to enjoy an healthy and vigorous Old Age, according to what he says again, *To fear the Lord, and depart from Evil, is Health to the Navel, and Marrow to the Bones*. And in this Way many are seen to enjoy a very healthy and vigorous Old Age. It is said of the Philosopher *Leontinus* *Gorgias*, who had practised the good Morals he had taught, that he completed an hundred and seven Years,

Years, and never ceased from Study and Business; and when he was asked, What could make him endure so long a Life? He answered, He had nothing to accuse or complain of his Old Age for. And if a Man enjoys an healthy and vigorous Old Age, he is still fit for Business, he is still useful and necessary to the World, and shall not see himself neglected or contemned: And then too he is the more sensible of Pleasures in his Old Age, and they shall not utterly leave Him to the last. Though Nature must decay in all Men, yet in such it will decay slower, and by more gentle Degrees. But the Drunkenness and Gluttony, the Sloth and Lusts, and the wild and furious Passions of a wicked ungovern'd Life, hasten the Infirmities of Old Age, and bring them upon some Men even before their time; and these Things make them also the more heavy and troublesome when they come; whereas a good and sober Life would either wholly prevent or much lessen them.

Farther; That Diligence is an honest Calling which Religion requires, that Frugality, and honest Dealing which it commands, are the most likely Means to provide a competent Portion of the World for our Support and Comfort in Old Age. The Blessing of God with a diligent Hand makes rich; but Idleness, and Riot, and Prodigality, and such a Course of Living as tends to draw down the Curse of God upon a Man, tend to bring him to Rags and Poverty in his Old Age or before it. The good Man is likely to take his Rest and enjoy what he has gotten when he can labour no more; and the Vicious and Wicked Man is likely to be condemned to toil and labour even with feeble and trembling Limbs.

Farther; He that has practised the Vertues of Religion well in his Life past, shall be respected and esteem-

esteemed in his old Age for what he has done, when he is not capable of Action and Business any longer: He that has lived justly and righteously among his Neighbours, will be the less liable to wrong; he that has liv'd peaceably will be quiet; he that has been good, kind and beneficent, will find others kind to him: This is evidently the most likely Course to find these Helps and Conveniences in Old Age. And he who has carried himself justly towards his Children, who has appeared cautiously to avoid any Ways of wronging them, and who has also appear'd to love them as well as himself, and to have consulted their Good, as well as his own Pleasure and Convenience, and to look upon them as Parts of himself; such a Man takes certainly the best Course to have dutiful Children, and to have them ready to help and Comfort him if he lives to a crasie Old Age. Besides, he that valued Wisdom in his younger Years, and earnestly pursued it, and lived according to the Rules of it, will be respected for this in his Old Age; for this may continue with him to the last. The Faculties of the Mind may be exercised still, though the Body be weak, and he may be useful and necessary still to advise and direct, tho' he cannot act, which is also the most important Part of Business of the two. And by constant Exercise, the Faculties may be kept vigorous and ready. They will not fail (says Cicero lb.) unless he ceases to use them. Old Men remember whatever they give their Minds well to. They will not forget (says he) where they lay their Money, or where their Estate lies; their Wits will remain if their Industry does. And Industry is that which is the constant Attendant and Property of a Vertuous and Good Mind. And from hence their Respect and Esteem will remain to them too; they will be sought to for Advice, when they cannot act themselves, and the Guidance of Affairs

airs will be committed to them: For these Things Solomon says, *The hoary Head is a Crown of Glory if it be found in the Way of Righteousness*, Prov. 16. 31.

In the next Place it may be said, to make good the Wise Man's Argument, That to have lived religiously and well in our younger Years, will mightily alleviate and soften the Inconveniences of those Evil Days, which it cannot prevent: As for instance,

The Applause and Approbation of a good Conscience then, and the Thoughts of that Good which a Man has done, will allay the Trouble for that he can do but little more. How pleasant will it be then to think, I have lived according to Reason, and as becomes a Man. I have honoured my self, and deserved the Praise and Esteem of Men: I have no reason to be ashamed of any Part of my Life: I have been reckoned useful in my Place, and to have adorned my Province and Station in the World: 'Tis pleasant for a Man to think there is no one can speak ill of him, at least for the general Course of his Life, but he must do it either out of Malice and Envy, or out of Ignorance: To think that he has pleased God, and has been accepted with him through Jesus Christ; that he has not lost a Life, but has spent it to the gaining of a better, he has laid out a Temporal for an Eternal One.

Again, The want of Sensual Pleasure is no great Trouble to a Wise and Vertuous Man. He knows how empty and vain a Thing it is; he had moderated his Desires after it before, by the Exercises of his Reason; by considering the Folly and Mischief of the excessive Love and Use of it. He does not desire it much, and is glad that he does not. As the Philosopher said of the Desire of Sensual Pleasure, when he was grown old: He was glad to be free from the Com-

Commands of so hard and tyrannous a Master: Besides; The want of this is abundantly made up to such a Man in the Pleasures of his Mind. And these the Old Man may still enjoy, and he may be the more at liberty for these, by being freed from the Importunities of the other. Learning and Philosophy will afford pleasant Thoughts and Entertainment to the last, and so will Religion and Devotion: But an ignorant and vicious Mind will, in the Dregs of Life, be sad, and melancholy, and discontented.

Farther, The very Thought and Assurance of the Approach and Nearness of Death, may be a Comfort to a Good Man against many of the Inconveniences of Old Age. Death it self will not be very terrible to him, whom a good Life has made ready for it; who knows his Sins pardoned, and his good Deeds accepted thro' the Mediator; who can say, *I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith, and henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness.* It is pleasant, instead of being terrible to a good Man, when he can say, *My Work is almost done, and I am now expecting my Reward: My Warfare is well-nigh accomplished, and the next thing that is to come is my Crown.* I am indeed near the time of parting with this World, but I shall exchange it for a better. I shall go to never-fading Pleasures, to durable Riches, to unspeakable Joy and Felicity. Can a Man be troubled with the Nearness and Approach of his Death, when he knows it will be a Change that will be much to his Advantage? And he that knows this, will be comforted most effectually, under the Evils of his present Condition: When he can think if nothing else can cure them, Death will, and that very shortly; it cannot be long e'er I shall be free from them all; e'er long my Pains will be at an end, and I shall be at ease; I shall be removed from among those that are wickedly weary of me, and willing to part with me, to live with them, that will be as willing to receive me. And if his Po-

sterity are such as can deserve the Blessing of his Prayers, he can comfortably commit them to the Providence of God, and think that by his Good, and Righteous, and Holy Life, he has entailed a Blessing upon them, which is a far better Portion with a small Provision, than the greatest abundance of ill-gotten Goods.

And thus much I think may suffice to demonstrate, That a Good and Vertuous Life, in the time of our Youth, makes the best Preparation that can be against the Evils and Inconveniences of Old Age. And this is certainly a very good Argument, for our minding Religion in our Youth. If we do so, we are fit to die, if it should not be our Lot to live to Old Age, and so our Labour is not lost in that Case, but apply'd to a very good purpose: And as such a Course is most likely to lengthen our Lives so far, so it will prevent or alleviate the Evils that commonly attend that time, if we do live to it.

For a Conclusion of this Discourse, and to strengthen the Argument, I shall briefly compare this with the other Ways of Living that many betake themselves to.

When we are entring upon the World, the most of us do dispose of our selves in one or other of these two Ways: Either we greedily follow the Pleasures of the World, and give our selves up to the Pursuit and Enjoyment of them: Or, we betake our selves to the eager Pursuit of Wealth, or Honours, and to raise a Fortune, as we call it. But, alas! neither of these Two Ways of Living, will be able to afford Men that True Comfort and Satisfaction in their latter End, which may be derived from Vertue and Religion: These will rather end in Vexation and Trouble.

They that give themselves up to Pleasures, treasure nothing but Sorrow and Shame for After-days. What Profit is there in These when They are gone?

What

What Fruit do They leave behind them? And how much Pain and Sorrow do They leave, when They leave an impair'd Estate, a sick distemper'd Body, and a guilty Conscience? And for a Man to think, I have amused and entertained my self with Vanities, and for them, have neglected and forsaken the most solid and durable Goods: I have received all my good Things here: Alas, how thin, how empty a Portion is it! Yet this is all! This is all I was born to enjoy! These guilty Pleasures cannot entitle me to better Things, therefore they are not Earnests of such. I have then received and spent all my Portion of Good and Happiness. These are very sad and grievous Thoughts, and such as these must the Sinner's guilty Frolicks end in. Accordingly we may observe, that none are so morose, and melancholy, and discontented in Old Age, as they who have licentiously followed their Pleasure in the former Part of their Life; who are smarting now for their foolish Frolicks, and have the Burthen of their present Evils, much the greater and the heavier for them.

Again, Let us consider those who have spent all their Life in heaping up of Wealth. These do seem indeed to be somewhat the wiser Persons of the two, but there is not much difference between them. He that most pursues Riches, does not certainly gain them; and while he is still drawn after them with Hopes, they perhaps, like his Shadow, fly from him still, and so he loses his Labour and his Life too. He that gets Riches, cannot be sure to keep them all his Days, or that he shall comfort his Old Age with them: And when that comes with the Evils, and Pains, and Distempers, which all the Wealth he has gotten cannot remove: When it cannot reprieve him from the Grave, nor set his Death a Moment farther from him: When it will leave him at his going out of this World, to all the Miseries of the next; and this cannot purchase his Peace with God, nor redeem his Soul

from Hell, nor gain him Admittance into the Courts of Heaven: Then how does he disdain all his Labour! how is his sick Mind fretted to think how he has lost his Time! how little Comfort does all his Labour in this kind afford him, when the Fruits of it are so useless to him!

Thus we see the Ends of worldly Men, of those who minded nothing all their Days, but the Pleasures and Wealth of this World. Their End is sad and gloomy, their Sweets turn bitter; their Abundance ends in Poverty and wretched Nakedness; their Mirth in Sorrow, and their short-liv'd Pleasures in everlasting Pain and Torment. But the good and vertuous Man closes up a troublesome Life with Joy and Gladness: His Labours end in Rest, and his Pains in Ease and Felicity. If he be encumbered with any outward Evils, his Comfort is, he is going away from them all: If he has received any good Things here, he knows also that far better Things are reserved for him in the World to come. Which he shall be certainly made a Partaker of, through the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ: *To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory World without End.*

THE

THE PRAYER.

A Almighty and most Wise, and most Gracious God; Thou art Glorious in Holiness, Fearful in Thy Praises, doing Wonders: All Thy Works, O Lord, are done in Judgment: Thou art Righteous in all Thy Ways, and Holy in all Works. We admire Thee, we praise, we bless Thee, for Thy wonderful Works of Creation, and for Thy wonderful Works of Providence. O Lord, there is none to whom we may compare, or liken Thee; there is no God besides Thee. And in particular, we desire at this time to praise Thee for the Wisdom and Goodness Thou hast shewn in Thy most Excellent Law, in that it is kindly and exactly suited to our Natures, and so is altogether fit to promote all our True Interests and our Happiness. To comply with this is our Wisdom, and Honour; it is Health to the Navel, and Marrow to the Bones; it has length of Days and good Repute, and Wealth and Peace to reward us with. In keeping Thy Commands, there is great Reward. Blessed then are the undefiled in the Way, who walk in the Law of the Lord. It is good for us to keep Thy Precepts, They are sweeter than Honey, and the Honey-comb, and more to be desired than Gold, yea, than much fine Gold; they best adorn and accomplish us; they are the Happiness of our Souls, as well as of our Bodies; they rectify and compose the Mind; they give us Peace and Strength within: Great Peace they have which love Thy Law, and nothing shall offend them. Then shall we never have occasion to be ashamed, when we have respect unto all Thy Commandments. Thou art Good, O Lord, and dost Good; O do Thou teach us Thy Statutes! O that our Ways were directed to observe them! Lord, make us as early as we can to remember Thee our Creator; to remember and turn unto Thee; to consider and know, and do the Duties which we owe to Thee as such: We have gone

astray like lost Sheep ; O seek Thou Thy Servants and save us, that we do not forget Thy Commandments: Write Thy Law in our Hearts, and put Thy Fear in our inward Parts: Make us to Reverence Thy Greatness and Glory, which is so bright in all Thy Works, and so wonderful in the Creation of our selves; for we, Lord, are fearfully and wonderfully made: O let us stand in awe, that we may not sin against Thee. Make us concern'd to please Thee, who art the Fountain of our Beings, and the Bestower of all our Good, that Thou may'st delight in us, to do us good, and that we may, according to Thy Design in making us, be happy. O Lord, forgive us, we pray Thee, all our past Wandrings from Thee; forgive us all our Sins of Negligence and Ignorance, and endue us, we beseech Thee, with the Grace of Thy Holy Spirit, to amend our Lives according to Thy Holy Word. Be reconciled to us by the Blood of Thy Son Jesus, through Faith, in which we humbly seek Thy Favour: We pray Thee turn from us all those Evils that we most righteously have deserved, in time past; and grant us hereafter to serve and please Thee, in Holiness and Righteousness all the Days of our Life. Lord, let us be planted in Thy House, and abide in the Communion of Thy Church, and there flourish like the Palm-Tree; and if we live to Old Age, let us be even then fruitful in good Works, to Thy Praise and Glory.

We make our humble Supplications to Thee, O Lord, for all Men. Let the Earth be filled with Knowledge of the Lord, as Waters cover the Sea; Prosper Thy Church, and give it great encrease of all Grace, and give it in Thy due time Tranquillity and Peace, deliver it from intestine Disturbance and outward Enemies. We humbly implore Thy Mercy upon these Kingdoms in general; Lord, grant that all things well-pleasing to Thee, may flourish and abound among us; and do Thou by Thy Almighty Providence watch over us, and direct our Publick Affairs for our good. Particularly, we pray for our most Gracious Queen; Grant Her in Health and Wealth long to live, strengthen her to vanquish and overcome all her Enemies. Teach us, and all Her Subjects, duly to consider whose Authority She hath, so to serve, honour, and humbly obey Her, in Thee and for Thee, according to Thy most Blessed Word and Ordinance; that so She may be the Minister of God to us for Good. Do Good to all amongst us, beyond what

what we can ask or think: Let Thy Blessing upon the Words which we have this Day heard, make it to dwell and take root in us, and bring forth Fruit even to an hundred fold. And let the same Gracious Mercy which has blest us this Day, with Things necessary for Life and Godliness; watch over us this Night, and give us safe and comfortable Rest. And if it shall please Thee to add still to our Lives, make us steady and persevering in well-doing to the end of our Days; all which we humbly crave, in the Name of Jesus Christ; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory.

OUR Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this Day our daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into Temptation: But deliver us from Evil. Amen.

Let me die the Death of the Righteous,
and let my last End be like his.

OF
B
... a famous Governor and Fortune-
... among the ... was ... for by
... King of ... to ... when
... they were upon his Borders. The Mellen-
... came to him with this Complaint from the
... that he ... in his

A Death-Bed Repentance :

SHEWING

How unreasonable it is for any Man
to rely upon it.

Let us pray :

PRevent us, O Lord, in all our Doings with thy most gracious
Favour, and further us with thy continual Help, that in all
our Works begun, continued and ended in Thee, we may glorifie
Thy Holy Name, and finally by Thy Mercy obtain Everlasting
Life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Numb. 23. 10. latter Part.

*Let me die the Death of the Righteous,
and let my last End be like his.*

BAlaam, a famous Sorcerer and Fortune-Tel-
ler among the Midianites, was sent for by
Balak King of Moab, to curse Israel, when
they were upon his Borders. The Messen-
gers came to him with this Complement from the
King: For I wot, that he whom thou blessest, is bles-
sed;

sed; and he whom thou cursest, is cursed, Chap. 22. Verse 6. Such an Esteem had he raised of himself among the ignorant Heathens. And very fair would the wicked Wretch have done that which Balak desired for the sake of the Wages of Iniquity which he loved. This appears by his seeking of Enchantments against Israel, as he several times did, as the 1st Verse of the 24th Chapter intimates; but it pleased God constantly to over-rule and hinder him. And when he sought to utter his direful and mischievous Charms, which before perhaps could blast the Fruits of the Earth, and cause Thunder and Lightning, and raise an Hurricane, and throw down Buildings: He could now do nothing of all this, but the Spirit of God constrain'd him to utter only Things honourable and favourable of Israel. In a deep sense, which this possess'd him with, of the favour of God to that People, and being so far enlightned for the present, though against his Will, as to understand, that they should be happy not only in this Life, but also in that to come, if they would keep the Commandments of their God; he therefore concludes his first Parable, or sententious and Prophetick Speech concerning them, in the Words of our Text,

Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his.

He was not at all reconciled to their God, who hinder'd him from getting those great Rewards which Balak offered him, nor did incline to become a Proselyte to the Jews Religion: He had rather enjoy his Gain and Honour among the Heathens still, like a false Prophet, than embrace the Truth and become meaner among the Jews. But yet he wishes for the happy end of the Jews: He would willingly be reckoned among them when he should come to die, that he might be a Partaker in their Felicity in the next World. This was the Sense of his Mind; and herein he speaks also the mind of a great many

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many others besides. There are many in the World who would live the lives of licentious Sinners, and yet at last would die the Death of Saints; who would have the Profits and Pleasures of Sin here, and hereafter the Rewards of Religion too. And as a great many wish this, so they think they have found out an Expedient to obtain it, and that is by a Death-Bed Repentance.

It shall be the whole Business of the present Discourse, to demonstrate the Folly and Danger of relying up a Death-Bed Repentance; of wishing or expecting with this False Prophet, to live a wicked Life and yet to *Die the Death of the Righteous*, and to *make an End like him*: And this I shall endeavour to set before you in the following Particulars.

I. There is no Man can possibly tell, whether he shall have the Space and Warning of a lingering Sickness to repent in, or no. Our Fortunes and Conditions are not at our own dispose, but at the disposal of Him whom we daily offend by our Wickedness: Nor can we be any more sure before-hand of the *Way*, than we can be of the *Time* of our going out of this World. Many Things may prevent us from having the Space of a lingering Sickness to repent in; and do we not greatly provoke the Supreme Disposer to prevent us of this, by our delaying to repent? How many Ways are there of dying, besides that on a Sick Bed? And which of them may be his Fortune, no Man can tell. Should we then defer our Repentance to a Sick Bed, when 'tis very uncertain and hazardous, whether we shall die there or not? But if we should die there, the Sickness may be such as to give us no Opportunity to repent there. It may take away the Use of Reason, may utterly hinder all composed Thinking: We may die in Convulsions, in a stupid Lethargy, or in the Ravings of a Fever, or under such violent and racking Pains,

Pains as shall effectually hinder us from doing any thing towards a happy Departure. Thus he who would not repent before, is not able to do it now: He wilfully lost all the time of Repentance to the last Minutes of it, and now he loses them too by his unfortunate Distemper: But how unreasonable is it for a Man to throw away all his Time to the last Minutes, when he does not know whether he shall be capable of using them to his Advantage, or not?

2. Let us consider, how great Inconvenience Men put upon themselves at last, who defer their Repentance to a sick and dying Bed.

They perhaps now think themselves very wise, and that they do well to put off all their Sorrows to come together, and to trouble them but once: But alas, when these do thus come together, they will be forced to conclude, they were very foolish in so doing; when they find the Burthen of all at once too heavy for them to bear: Certainly a great Load is much easier carried in several Parcels, than all at once; and if the whole be too heavy for our Strength, it were our Wisdom to divide it. When a Man is under the Pains and Faintness of a Disease, the Grief of parting with all that he has in this World, all his dear Relations, his loved Enjoyments, and the sweet Fruits of his own Labours: When he is a Prisoner to his Bed, is separated from all his Pleasures, loaths the greatest Dainties, has his Head aking, his Heart faint, his Limbs feeble and trembling: These sure are very unfit Circumstances to put off the Trouble and Sorrows of Repentance to. How wretched must he be, who has at the same time Trouble without and Anguish within? Pain in his Body and Distress in his Mind? Who, in this Condition, must have his Conscience accusing him for his ill Life, calling to mind past and forgotten Follies and Extravagancies, when he has the Pardon of them to seek: And by Consequence he must have the Flames of Hell,

Hell, as it were before him, and be terrified with the Apprehensions of being speedily carried before his offended Judge, to be doomed to his Eternal and Unalterable State? How sad is it he told he must now suddenly leave this World, and does at this very time deserve to be thrown into Hell! Those that defer their Repentance to a Death-Bed, do not rightly understand, or else they do not consider the True Nature of it: They think to pass it over with a Lord have Mercy upon me, with a general slight Confession that they have sinned, and with a few Sighs and formal Resolutions, that they will do so no more. They do not consider, That True Repentance is a very bitter Thing; that in great Sinners especially, as these Men are wont to be, it must be attended with a very heavy Sorrow, with great Anguish of Soul, with earnest Indignation against themselves for their Sins, with a Sense of the terrible Deserts of them, that they must judge and condemn themselves as unworthy to find Favour with God, and deserving the Everlasting Punishments of Hell. And these sure are very unhappy Thoughts to be joined with the sad Circumstances of Sickness and Dying; and these Men put off the most uneasy and afflicting Thoughts to be born then, when they are in the most feeble Condition, and the most unfit to bear them; we shall, we might think, have Trouble enough without them, with the sad outward Circumstances of such a Case, and might say, *Sufficient for that Day is the necessary and unavoidable Evil thereof*, and may easily see, if we will, that it is highly foolish to bring upon it more Evil and Trouble than it needs to have. It is plainly our Wisdom to provide before-hand against that time for the Comfort of it; to lay up Supports and Consolations to allay and mitigate the Evils that will attend it. And this we might do by practising our Repentance in the time of our Health, by forsaking our Sins betimes, and living a good and vertuous Life for some time before we come to die. Then if we have Sor-

row without, we shall have Joy within; if the Body be in pain, we may be at ease in the Mind. The Reflections upon a well-spent Life would comfort us in our Weakness; the joyful Hopes and Expectations of entering into Rest and Happiness, would alleviate our present Pains; and a sense of Favour and Reconciliation with God would conquer the Fears of Death, and make us ready and willing to appear before our Judge.

3. But if a Man has the Warning of a lingering and slow Sickness to repent of his Sins, and prepare for his Death; 'tis yet a very great Hazard whether he will repent under it or not. If he has not such a Disease as will necessarily hinder this, yet many other Things may and often do so. We do not seldom see Men that deferred their Repentance till this time, as far from performing it then as ever they were before. A Man may think, while he is in Health, and engaged in the World, and exposed to the Temptations of it, that the danger of that time, and the Confinement and Separation from the World, will mightily help him to do this necessary Work then, and put him upon it: But, alas! the contrary to this does very ordinarily come to pass.

With some the very Pain and Trouble of their Disease, though it does not take away their Senses, and the use of their Reason, yet it is able to distract their Minds, and divert them from all Thoughts of Repentance, and making their Peace with God. Does not daily Experience teach us, that a severe Pain, if it be but at a Tooth, and that even in a Person habitually pious and good, is able to disturb the Mind, and unfit one for any Exercise of Devotion; and so detain the Thoughts, that they can fix on nothing but that? All that we are commonly sensible of in such a case, is the present Pain; and all that we can be concerned about, is to get rid of the present importunate Grievance:

vance. And is it not much rather likely to be thus with a Man under the Pain and Trouble of Sickness? If so little an Inconvenience can divert even a good Man from fixed and good Thoughts; how much more likely is it, that greater Pain and Uneasiness will divert him from such who is habitually wicked, who has lived all his Life an utter Stranger to such Thoughts, has never taken the Pleasure, nor found the Benefit of them? Besides, as the delaying Sinner has been wont to love his Body better than his Soul, to contrive the Satisfaction and Convenience of that, rather than the Everlasting Happiness of this: He must needs be apt in this Distress to be still in the same Disposition; and to be so busied about the Griefs and Pains of his Body, as to neglect his Soul still, as he has done all his Days before: And if so, what a madness is it for a Man to expect and wait for the very worst Disposition and State of his Body, that he may then perform the greatest and most important Business of his Soul!

Again, The very Fear and Apprehension of Dying quickly, may happen to take away all Thought or Concern of preparing for Death: This may seem unlikely, but yet it does sometimes come to pass. I knew a Man (says one who had been wont to visit sick and dying Persons) and he not altogether a careless Liver neither, who being at the Point of Death, when he was admonish'd by a Minister to prepare himself for his Departure, was so possessed and overwhelmed with the Thought that he was in danger of speedy Death, that he could think of nothing else but of sending for this and the other Physician, of taking this and the other Medicine; and all the Care and Thought that he could be possess'd with, was only how he might recover and escape the present and imminent Danger; and in the midst of such Thoughts he breathed his last. And thus it is very likely to be

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with many Men: He who has great Affairs upon his Hands, and especially if they be a little entangled: He who leaves a Family but ill provided for, or likely to need his Presence among them: He who would fain see a Son or a Daughter well disposed of and settled, as we call it, will be apt to be wholly devoured with the same Care. Thus sure it is very likely to be with a great Lover of the World; with him that loves nothing but what is here; that has no Treasure in Heaven, nor Expectations of any thing comfortable in the other World: When he apprehends himself in danger to leave all at once what he has here, to leave it for ever, and go he knows not where, and he knows not to what, but fears exceedingly a great deal of Ill; such a Man must needs be liable to a great Consternation at the Summons of Death, and to think of nothing but by what means he may avoid it for the present, and gain some more time to make a better Preparation for it than he has done.

And farther, It may be the sick Man is not in danger of a speedy Death; or perhaps if it be so, he will not believe it, as it is with a great many: He hopes perhaps to recover this Sickness, and promises himself after it many Years of Life, when he has but a few Moments to live: And the Flatteries of Friends will be apt to encourage this Conceit; and the Physician must give him, it may be, more Hopes than himself has, to support this sick Man's Spirits, and assist his own Prescriptions: And then, though the Concern to avoid Death does not put him by his Repentance, yet the Hopes of longer Life may do it; he will think he needs not yet repent; the dangerous Period before which he purposes to do it, is yet a great way off; and thus he goes on to cheat himself into everlasting Perdition.

And it is no wonder if a Man who has been habitually wicked, and lived many Years in his Sins, does take any Encouragement to put off his Repentance still, and can hardly find in his Heart, even upon his Death-Bed, to do this. The Custom of Sinning is like a second Nature, and is not but with the greatest Difficulty and Labour overcome. It will hardly ever forsake a Man: Of the habitual Sinner is that for the most part true, which is said, *Job 20, 11. His Bones are full of the Sins of his Youth, which shall lie down with him in the Dust.* How unlikely indeed is it, that a Man should in a Moment so fall out with his Sin as to hate it, and throw it off for ever, when he has many Years loved and cherished it; or that he should now all at once be possessed with an hearty Love of God and Goodness, which for many Years he has neglected and hated? Accordingly we often see Persons upon their Death-Bed, still the very same that they were before; as they lived, so they die; there is no Change or Alteration in the least appears in the State and Disposition of their Minds. We find them exercising the beloved Sin in their Discourse, when they cannot do it in their Actions; it appears to have still a fast possession of the Soul, even when the Opportunities of committing it are taken from them. How often do we find the prophane Person then prophane, the habitual Swearer cursing and swearing with his last Breath? How often is the covetous Person taken up with his worldly Affairs, thinking and talking of his Bags and Possessions, or of gainful Bargains, and farther Gettings, even to the very Minute when he must lose and part with all? How often is the proud and vain Person then vain and proud too, even then concerned about Beauty and Clothes, about trimming up and adorning the poor wretched Carcass, which is likely, within a few Moments, to be

be but Rottenness and Putrefaction. This Hardness at Death, and Unconcernedness even then about a future State, is a very tremendous and deplorable Judgment of God; which very often falls upon those who have long resisted the Means of Grace, and refused to repent and turn to Him. He gives up the obstinate Sinner to a Judicial Hardness, which the very near Approach of Death and Judgment shall not be able to move: He lets him be forgetful of himself at the Point of Death; because he was and would be all his Life long forgetful of God and his Duty to Him: He would not make sure of his Pardon before, and now he shall have no Thought or Concern about it.

And there is yet another Hindrance of the delaying Sinner's Repentance at the Point of Death, which all such are in great Danger of, and many fall under; and that is Despair: The same Adversary of their Souls, who tempted them before to presume, will now, if they are at all awakened, and sensible of their Condition, be very ready to hurry them into this. And surely there is too much Ground for such a Temptation in the Case of him who has deferred his Repentance till now: He must be in great Danger of falling into a hopeless and despairing Sense of his Condition, if he has any at all; whose own Conscience, with the Adversary, can tell him, he has squander'd away the Time of Mercy, and his Day of Grace is come to its End, before he has secured the Grace and Favour of God. He has spent his whole Life in Sin and Rebellion against Him that made him; to whose Glory he ought to have lived, and whose Mercy and Love he now stands in need of: That he has utterly lost one Life, and shall not be trusted with another: That as he can never undoe the Ills he has done, so he has no Time left to alter his Course in, and live it better. And when he thinks with himself,

that at such and such times he was invited and earnestly urged to repent and break off his Sins, and he had some good Motions towards it in his Mind; but he made a shift to stifle those Motions; he slighted the good Counsel, and despised the necessary Reproofs. How apt must he be in the midst of such Thoughts to fall into Despair? to think that God will now only laugh at his Calamity; that if he should repent, he should be refused: And then he will neglect it, as thinking it now too late, and that it would be in vain. This is the sad Case of many a dying Sinner, who has lived all his Life in the contempt of God and Religion: He now gives himself for lost, and goes to Hell, expecting to go to Hell: He throws away his last Minutes in Despair, after he has wilfully lost his whole Life before in Presumption.

So many Things there are which may hinder a Man from having any Mind or Thought to repent at last: But now when no Man can possibly tell, but some one or other of these may be his Case when he comes to die, if he neglects this before, how plainly unreasonable and extravagant is it to put off our Repentance to that time?

Another Argument to dissuade Men from relying upon a Death-Bed Repentance, may be this: What Repentance Men do practise in that Condition, it is very seldom sincere and true. Some indeed are struck then with a mighty Fear of God, and dread of their final Sentence, and of the Punishments of Hell; which they are conscious to themselves they have deserved, and which they think are near the getting hold on them. And in this Fright they are full of Confessions of their Sins, and Condemnations of themselves for their former Evil Life; and earnestly they sue for Pardon and Mercy, and make great Pro-
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stations how good they will be, if it will but please God to spare them. But alas, all this, with the most of Men in this Condition, is but false and dissembled; all this does seldom arise to a true and sincere Repentance. It proceeds in the most from a wrong Principle: They only dread the Wrath of God and the Punishments of Sin; they do not hate their Sin; they are not truly fallen out with it; they do not love God, nor are heartily reconciled to his Commandments. True Repentance ought to be entirely voluntary and free; but this is entirely forced: They talk of leaving only what is leaving of them, and of sinning no more, when they think they shall not have Opportunity to entertain themselves with their beloved Sins any more. It is possible a Man in this Condition may think himself, that his Repentance is sound, and his Resolutions are hearty; but it is very easie for him to be deceiv'd. It is easie (says one) for a Man to think he has no mind to do that which he plainly sees it is not in his Power to do. Possibility (says he) is the best Proof and Trial of the Will: If thou dost not while thou canst do, this does most manifestly and truly shew, That thou hast not the Will to do. There is a great deal of dissembled seeking to God, and pretended Conversion to Him, under Distress and Affliction among the Sons of Men: Such was that of the *Jews*, spoke of in *Psalm* 78. 34. where 'tis said, *When He slew them, then they sought Him, and they returned and enquired early after God.* But it is added, in Verse 36, 37. of that *Psalm*, *Nevertheless, they did flatter Him with their Mouth, and lied unto Him with their Tongue; for their Heart was not right with Him, neither were they stedfast in His Covenant.* In like manner the late Penitent makes perhaps very earnest Addresses to God; but it is only to get out of his

present Distress; and if this be granted, and his Fears are over, he soon forgets all the good Promises that he had made. Of those who make these good Vows and Protestations in their Sickneſs and Danger, a very ſmall Proportion do fulfil them when they have eſcaped their Danger; which ſhews they are, for the moſt part, falſe and deceitful Ones: The moſt of them return, after a little while, to their abdicated Sins, like the Dog to his Vomit, or the Swine that was waſht to wallowing in the Mire. Or inſtead of thoſe nauſeated Sins, ſays one, (*Hamm. Praſt. Cat.*) they make Choice of ſome other new Path to Hell, entertaining Covetouſneſs inſtead of Prodigality, ſpiritual Pride inſtead of Carnal Security, Envy, Malice, Sedition, Faction, in Commutation for Luſt or Drunkenneſs, and Swearing. And it deſerves to be conſidered, Whether it be not moſt likely, that the delaying Sinner's Repentance on a Sick Bed, will be falſe and diſſembled; when he has all his Life-time propoſed to himſelf not to repent; but when Death ſummons him into another World, is it not very likely that he now keeps to that which has been his ſettled Reſolution? And that his Repentance has no other Principle now, than his Apprehenſions of the nearneſs of Death and Judgment? Is it not very likely, that he who would never fear Punishment, till he came to think it near, does now fear it only becauſe he thinks it near; and that all the Principle of his Repentance, is the fear of approaching Punishment? This then is all the Repentance that ſuch an one is likely to pra-ctice at ſuch a time; and ſuch as this will never be accepted with God, nor bring a Man to Heaven; with only ſuch as this, he may periſh everlaſtingly. How fooliſh and extravagant is it then for a Man to put off his Repentance through all that time, when it is moſt likely to be true, and wherein

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he may have the Proof of its Truth in Fruits meet for Repentance? And that he should put it off to that time, wherein it is most likely to be false, and cannot be proved True by answerable Fruits?

5. From what has been said last, I may frame another Argument against our relying upon a Death-Bed Repentance; and that is, It is at the best but Uncertain and Uncomfortable. The Change of Mind which God requires; must proceed from a deep Sense of the Vileness of Sin in it self; of that Ingratitude, Injustice and Rebellion, which is in it towards the Great God: There must be a Hatred of it upon these Accounts, and earnest Resolutions to forsake all Sin for the future. And this Change must proceed to the loving of God more than this World; to the chusing and preferring Heaven before Earth, and the Pleasures of Religion more than those of Sense and Sin. And if the Principle of our Sorrows and Vows were such a Change of Mind as this, they would then continue, if Life were continued, and would be put in Practice in the Course of a godly, righteous and sober Conversation, even when the Danger and Fright were over. And in that case God will accept the Will for the Deed, if it be a firm and rectified Will, (*Hamm. Ib.*) tho' the Man does not live to put his Resolutions in practice; when it is his Misfortune, not his Fault, that he does not live a good Life after it; because he has no more time granted him to live, not because he would not live well. But now whether the dying Sinner's Repentance be such as this, or not, no Man can tell. This late Repentance may prove Sincere and Sufficient to find Favour with God, who searches the Heart, and tries the Reins; but it is very unlikely to be such, as the former Argu-

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ment has demonstrated; and it very seldom does prove such; and no Man that dies in it, can possibly assure himself, or be assured by any one else, that his Repentance is sincere and acceptable with God; and therefore at the best it is uncertain and uncomfortable. No Man can tell the Truth of his Repentance till it is put to a Trial; till it meets with Temptations, and conquers them; and brings forth the Fruits of Vertue and Holiness. And since without Holiness no Man can see God, but the Holiness of the Heart must be demonstrated by that of the Life and Conversation, as our Saviour says, *A Tree is known by its Fruit*; it cannot then be certainly pronounced concerning any Man what shall become of him, who has lived a vitious and ungodly Life all his Days, and only comes to some Sorrows and good Protestations and Vows on his Death-Bed. We may hope well in Charity, but cannot determine: And though we cannot positively say, there is no Hope in such a Case; yet we must say, there is very small Hope. And this is according to the Sense of the Ancients in this Matter, whose Opinions, to confirm what has been said, I shall produce.

Augustin, (lib. 50. *Hom. H. 41.*) speaks thus: He who, in his last Extremity of Sickness, seems to repent, and departs this Life; I confess to you, I do not deny him what he asks (by which he means Absolution or the Blessed Sacrament,) that is, I treat him as a true Penitent, because he may be so for ought I know; but I cannot presume to say positively, that he has made a good Departure. A good Man, living well (says he) goes out of this World secure: And he who practices Repentance in his Health, and afterwards lives well, he may be secure; but he that repents only at last, at the Point of Death;

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Death; whether he be secure or not, I am not secure. Again, he says to this Case, Wouldst thou be free from Doubt? Would you avoid Uncertainty in a Matter of such Importance, then practice Repentance while thou art in Health; for if thou dost so, thou art secure when thy last Day comes upon thee: If you ask, Why? I say, Because thou hast then practised thy Repentance, while it was yet in thy Power to have sinned longer: But if thou then do this when thou canst sin no more, thy Sins have forsaken thee rather than thou them. And he adds, I therefore grant thee Repentance, because I know not what may be the Will of God concerning thee. If I certainly knew it would not profit thee, I would not grant it; if I certainly knew it would profit, I would not thus admonish, I would not terrifie thee. Chuse then, says he, that which is Certain, and do not rely upon that which is Uncertain. Thus speaks he.

Another (*Isidorus de sum. bono*) says thus: If any Man repents, while he could go on in Sin; and while he yet lives, cleanses himself from all Iniquity; there is no doubt, but when he dies he shall be translated to Eternal Rest: But if a Man spends his whole Life in Wickedness, and then comes to repent at the Point of Death; as his Damnation is uncertain, so his Pardon is doubtful.

I shall only mention one more, and that is *Salvian*, (*de Avarit. lib. 1. cap. 5.*) What to say in this Case, I know not, (says he) what I may permit, I am utterly ignorant. To discourage and withhold a Man from seeking and using this last Remedy, were hard and impious; but to promise and assure him any thing in so late a Repentance, were also rash. It is his best Course in this Condition to leave nothing

nothing untried, rather than do nothing towards helping himself; especially because tho' I know not whether this may help at last, yet we may be certain that to attempt nothing is pernicious.

Thus much they have said, and thus much at least must be said to this Case. And now methinks this should be sufficient to deter any Man from relying upon a Death-Bed Repentance, especially any Man that has Time and Opportunity in his Hands to perform a more sure One: This is at the best but an uncertain and uncomfortable One; no Man can tell whether it will be accepted of God or not, because no Man can certainly tell whether it be true or not: And though a Sinner ought not to despair in such a Case, yet he can have but little, and that a very wavering Hope. Such a one may be saved, but neither he nor any one else can be assured that he shall be so. There is so much ground of Hope in this Case, as may encourage a wretched Sinner who has neglected himself all his Days, at his last Hours to try what Repentance will then do for him; it is the only Remedy he has left; and if that fail, nothing will help him: But there is not so much Ground of Hope, as may give any Man, who is now in Health, any reasonable Encouragement to put off his Repentance till that time. Certainly it is very unreasonable for a Man to build the Hopes of his Salvation, upon that which cannot secure his Salvation to him.

To conclude:

If the Gospel affords any small Encouragement to them that repent upon a Death-Bed, yet it gives no Man any at all to defer, and put off his Repentance till then: He is guilty of great Folly and Presumption that shall do so. In this wilful deferring of our Repentance,

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we do greatly provoke Almighty God, not to grant us the Benefit of this Remedy at last. How justly may God say to such a Man then, as *Wisdom* speaks, *Prov. 1. 24, 25, 26. Because I have called, and you have refused; I have stretched out my Hand, and you would not regard me; but have set at nought all my Council, and would none of my Reproof: I also will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh. Now you shall call, and I will not answer; and tho' you seek me early, you shall not find me.* He may most justly cut a Man off in his Sins; by a sudden Death, and not give him any Warning or Space to repent: He may very justly put an end to our Days by some such Disease as shall hinder our Repentance: He may very justly give a Man up to a final Hardness; and so let him die in his Sins, who would needs live in them. And he may let the Sinner's Remorse and Trouble be, as his false Heart enclines to make it, but false and dissembled, such as cannot amount to a True Repentance; and then all his Cries and Tears, all his Vows and Protestations shall be vain and not accepted; but he shall go to feel what he fears, and from the Torment of fearing that he is Undone, to that of finding he is so. These Things may in God's just Judgment befall him, who had much Time given him to repent in, who was often called to it by Ministers and Friends, and perhaps warned by some Afflictions, but would needs put it off to the end of his Life. And when God cuts off such a Man in his Career of Sin, without giving him space to reform his Life, it may be well suspected he has rejected all the Sorrows, Vows and Protestations that attended his Departure. It is not a Favour promised, that a Man shall have the Grace of Repentance given him then, who has refused it often before. Tho' God out of his Sovereign Grace, may give a good and safe Death to him that has lived all his Life wickedly, yet he has no where bound himself to
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this; he has not given us any express or intimated Allowance to depend upon, or expect any such Favour: And then it is altogether unreasonable to expect it. Let us then, to make sure that we shall *die the Death of the Righteous*, repent while we are in Health, and may have time to prove the Truth of our Repentance in a good Life, and so to assure the Acceptance of it with God. Let us repent when we are called to it, and when the Grace of God is ready to assist us, and to give us a True Repentance. Let us endeavour to live the Life of the Righteous, for as long time as we can before we come to die, and then we shall be sure to make a good End. *Mark the perfect Man, and behold the Upright; for the End of that Man is Peace.*

Now to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory World without End.

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PRAYER.

O Most Holy, and most Righteous Lord our God, the Judge and Governour of all the World; Thou lovest Righteousness and hatest Iniquity. With Shame and Self-abasement we present our selves before Thee at this time, who are vile Earth and miserable Sinners: Who have broke Thy Laws, and done Evil against Thee what we could; who have followed the corrupt Inclinations of our Natures, and the Evil Customs and Practices of the World, rather than the Way of Thy Just and Good Commandments. If we should say, We have no Sin, we should deceive our selves, and the Truth were not in us: We therefore humbly confess our Sins before Thee, which it were in vain for us to endeavour to conceal from Thee: For we know, that to the Lord our God belong Mercies and Forgivenesses, tho' we have rebelled against Thee. Thou art He, who delightest not in the Death of a Sinner, but hast rather that He should turn to Thee and live. We thank Thee, O Father of Mercies, that Thou allowest us the Benefit of Repentance: We bless Thee for the Great Propitiation, made by Jesus Christ in his dying a Sacrifice for our Sins: And we give Thee most humble and hearty Thanks, O Lord, for Thy Goodness to us in particular, who are here before Thee. In that Thy Forbearance and Long-suffering does yet afford us space and time for Repentance; that we are not now at this time among the Damned in Hell, as we have greatly deserved to be; that we have Time allow'd us to consider our Ways, and turn our Feet unto Thy Testimonies. Give us therefore, we pray Thee, the Grace of True Repentance; and let us have that to praise Thee for, added to all Thy other Goodness towards us. Make us to know in this our Day the Things that belong to our Peace, before they are hid from our Eyes. Suffer us not to harden our Hearts against the Invitations and Warnings of Thy Word. Let all of us that are here present be seeking the Lord while He may be found, and calling upon Him while He is nigh; and without delay

lay, let us betake our selves to repent and turn to Thee; to mortifie all Carnal and Corrupt Affections, to cease from all Evil and to do Good. Make us, O Lord, seriously to consider the great Uncertainty to us, of what is to come; let us not presume upon Thy Mercy, and so encourage our selves to continue in our Sins, lest we thereby put an end to the Exercises of Thy Mercy towards us: Let us not be so foolish as to provoke Thee by our unnecessary Delays, to cut us off by a sudden and untimely Death, or to doom us to a final and judicial Hardness: Let us not put off our Repentance to such a time, as is not convenient to do it in, or to such a time when we are likely to be deceived and imposed upon, by our own false Hearts in the doing it: But make us now to set about it, while Thou callest us to it, and art ready to assist us, and to make us sincere, and art certainly willing, and ready to accept it: To resolve, that we will not henceforth live to our selves, but to Thee; that we will make Thy Holy Laws, the Rule of our Actions, and endeavour in all Things, to Honour and Glorifie Thee. And do Thou graciously accept us, according to Thy Promises declared unto Mankind in Christ Jesus, and give Strength and Stability to these our Resolutions.

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Extend, we humbly beseech Thee, Thy Goodness to all the Heathen and Infidel Nations: Let a mighty and powerful Call go forth among them, and turn them to the Knowledge of Thee the only True God, and of Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. Be mindful of Thine Ancient People the Jews, and bring them to the Acknowledgement of the True Messiah. Pour out an abundant Measure of Thy Spirit upon Thy Church, that we may see and understand what is Evil among us, and may repent and do our first Works. Lord, in Thy Mercy reform these Nations wherein we live, from Atheism and Prophaneness, from Pride and Schism, from Envy, and Malice, and all Uncharitableness, from Luxury and Riot, and Sloth and Idleness, Uncleanliness and Intemperance. Let us not go on to provoke Thee by these our Sins, lest our Iniquity prove our Ruine. We pray Thee to bless abundantly our Good and Gracious Queen; give Her a long and happy Reign among us. Continue the Royal Family to rule over us with Wisdom, Justice, Clemency and the Fear of the Lord. Bless always those that shall be in Authority under them in Church and State

State; make them a Terrour to all that is Evil, and a Praise to them that do well, that we may be all happy, in a great Increase of Vertue and True Godliness amongst us. Bless all our Relations, and Friends, and Acquaintance, and keep their Hearts and Minds in the Knowledge and Love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. In whose Name we humbly beg the Mercies of the Night; we thank Thee for those of the Day past; for all that we have received, and for our good Hopes of more to come: To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory World without end.

OUR Father, which art in Heaven; Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. Amen.

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State; make them a Terror to all that is evil, and a
 Praise to them that do well, that we may be all happy
 in a great Inheritance of Virtue and Grace. O God, who
 art the Father of our Father, and the Father of our
 and keep their Hearts and Minds in the knowledge and
 Love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. In
 whose Name we humbly beg the Mercies of thy Right
 hand: For those of the Day, for all that we have
 received, and for our good Works, we pray to receive: To
 whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all
 and glory, and power, and praise, and honour, and dominion,
 forever and ever. Amen.

OUR Father, which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.
 Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in Heaven, and on Earth.
 Give us this Day our daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases,
 as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into Temptation,
 but deliver us from Evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power,
 and the Glory, forever and ever. Amen.

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